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Taziyeh:
History, Form and Contemporary Relevance

By

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۱۲۹۹

تغزیه

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The poster of performances, on the day of Ashura, in Tekiyeh Dowlat 1879. The fourth performance was "The martyrdom of Imam Hussein" From Anassort, Jabber *Taziyeh the Treasure of Ritual and Religious Drama*, Tehran: 1992.

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Glossary

The following glossary list shows, names quoted in various written forms within different sources.

Abolfazl, Abulfazl.

Abumoslem, Abomoslem, Abomoslim.

Ali, Ally, Alee.

Ali Akbar, Ali Akber, Alee Acbar.

Ali Asghar, Ali Asgar.

Amr-Ibn Sâd, Amr-Ibn Saud.

Ashura, Ashora.

Fatimah, Fateme, Fatemah.

Ferdowsi, Firdausi.

Hassan, Hasan.

Hussein, Husain, Husyn, Hossein, Huoossien,

Husayn, Housin, Husseyne, Hoossien.

Hur, Hurr.

Imam, Imaum.

Iraq, Irak.

Iskandar, skandar.

Kajar, Qajar.

Kassem, Kassim, Kasim, Kaussem, Qassem.

Kikawos, Kaykavus.

Kofa, Kofe, Koufa, Kufa, Kufe, Cufa.

Koran, Quran, Coran.

Majlis, Majles,

Medina, Madinah

Moharram, Muharram, Moharrem, Muharam.

Moslim, Moslem, Muslem, Muslim.

Moaviyah, Moawiah.

Mokhtar, Muchtâr.

Muhammad, Mohammad, Mohammed, Muhammed,

Mohammadan, Mahomet, Mohometan.

Ommids, Ommiades, Umayyads, Umayyas.

Omar, Omer, Umar.
Orwauh, Orva.

Pahlavi, Pahlawi.

Ramazán, Ramadan, Ramedan.
Reza, Riza, Rida.
Rostam, Rustam
Rowzeh, Rouzeh, Rodeh, Rouze.
Rookeeya, Rookheeya, Rughieh.

Sâdi, Sa'di.
Safavian, Safavid.
Sassanian, Sassanid,
Shahname, Shahnamah, Shahnameh.
Sheah, Shi'te, Shi'a, Shi'i
Shemr, Shimr, Shamer.
Siyavush, Siawosh.
Suhrah, Sohrab

Taziyeh, Tazyas, Tazieh, Ta'zieh, Tazeeya,
Taziyd, Ta'ziye, Taazieh, Tazeh, Taziêh
Takya, Tekiyeh, Tekeyeh, Teke, Takiyah.

Yazid, Yazeed, Yessed.

Ziad, Ziyad.

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Preface

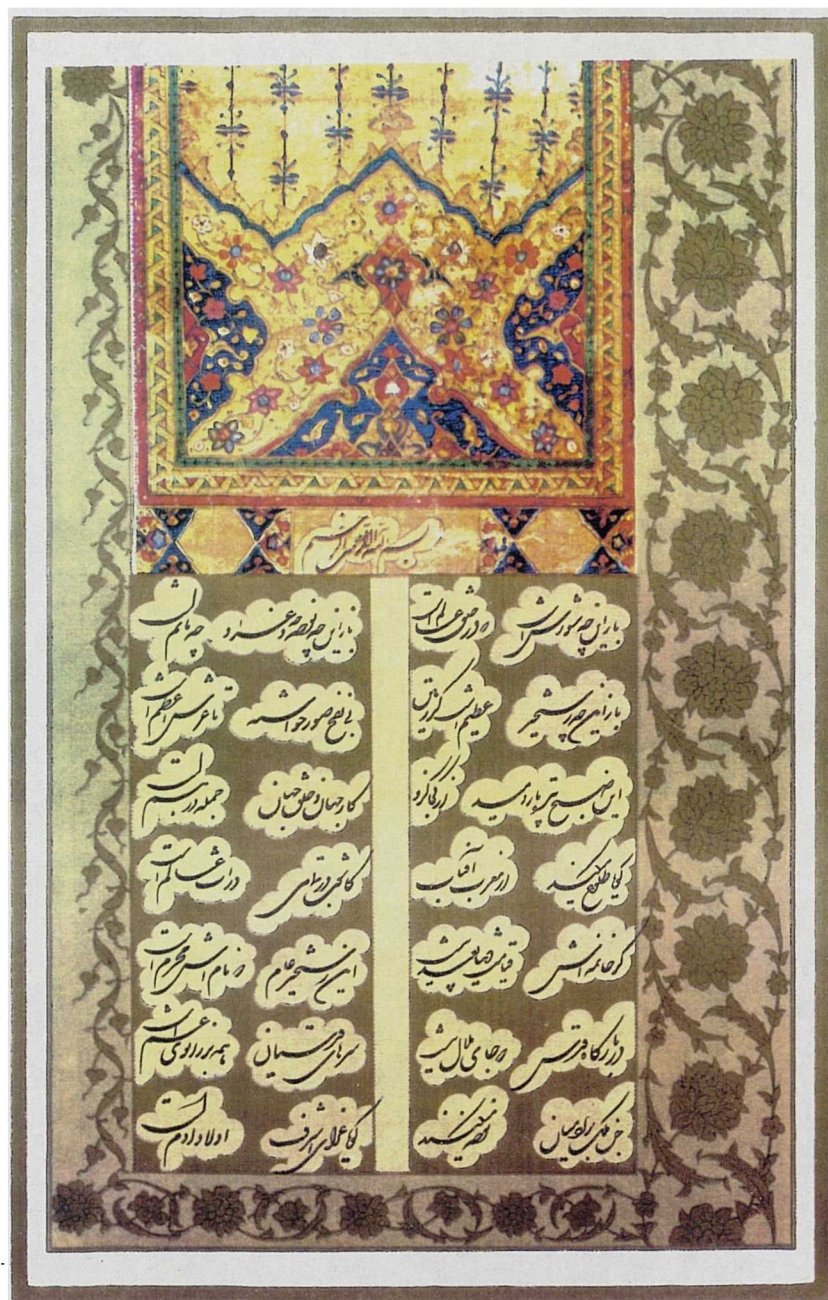
The intention of preparing this thesis is an examination of Taziyeh, the passion play in Iran which appeared initially as part of the observance of Ashura for the sake of the commemoration of Imam Hussein and his family. Taziyeh as a part of the religious observance of Shiite Muslims exists in Iran and different Islamic countries.

Taziyeh during the course of centuries found a form of religious drama which made it feasible to be performed on other occasions than the Muharram ceremonies. The realisation of the existence of dramatic features and the appearance of several different types of Taziyeh, tragic and comic, created a ground for its existence to arouse the interest of travellers to Iran during the period of the last two centuries and Iranian and non-Iranian dramatists and scholars of the present century. These accounts and views first allow us to find the evidence for the date of the development of Taziyeh and second to assess the contemporary scholarly comments on the dramatic values of the Taziyeh. In this way Taziyeh has been found comparable with Greek, Medieval and Modern Drama.

The Historical, Mythical and legendary grounds of the Taziyeh have been taken into consideration in this study in order to gain access to the true roots of the Taziyeh in the old land of Iran while the lack of a place for Taziyeh in Persian literature will become clear.

The final part has been devoted to establishing the actual position of Taziyeh after the Islamic revolution in Iran by looking at the function of Taziyeh in Iranian society, theology and religious observance to-day. I have put my stress on an argument for a purifying of the Taziyeh to make it function more effectively in Iranian society.

CHAPTER ONE



*Praise of Imam Hussein by Mohtasham. Calligrapher: Abdulmajid Taleghani
Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance publication, Tehran, 1986.*

What is Taziyeh?

A passion play.

"The show (Performance) has not been started yet. The platform, *Sakou*, is empty, no curtain separates the audience from the platform nor from the huge setting which could clearly be seen. The *Tekieyh* (performance space) has been elaborately decorated by standing or hanging black and green flags surrounding boxes and pillars. The symbols of the Hand of Abbas and the Bier awaken the feelings of the audience towards the events of Karbela.

All this decoration creates a magnificent atmosphere for the performance of a *Majlis* (play) of Taziyeh. The preliminaries begin. After an hour of witnessing the procession of devotees who beat their breasts, silence is established. The group of musicians begin to play a plaintive melody. The self-composed group of players for today's Majlis led by the *Ostad*, *Moein al Boka* (Taziyeh Stage-Manager), arrives in the Tekieyh. They are singing a dirge, in chorus, while promenading twice round the platform, smoothly. This part stands as a prologue. After all this actors yield their place to the *Ostad*. He stands on the platform and thanks the sponsor of the Taziyeh and the audience. Then he gives a summary of the play to the audience, adding his own interpretation of the story and laying curses upon the unjust tyrants. When the *Ostad* has preached, those who should play the roles arrive in the arena and stand in their positions until the *Ostad* has fulfilled his prayer and preaching. At the end of this moment the group of musicians is beckoned by the *Ostad* to play a short melody"¹

The Persian passion play or Taziyeh is a dramatic form adapted from the religious ceremonies commemorating the suffering and tragic death of Imam Hussein [the third Imam of the Shi'ite Moslems] and his family and friends in

¹ Beizai , Bahram A Study On Iranian Theatre Tehran, 1965., p.144.

the desert of Karbela. Taziyeh as a social activity is fused with literary phenomena, mythical action, legend and religious hagiography arising out of the popular need and demand of Iranian people.

Thus it has become a feasible proposition to use Taziyeh to attempt communication to the masses as a form of education and enlightenment, though the existence of historical errors obsess scholars and make Taziyeh untrustworthy as a source.

The writers of Taziyeh had no interest in historical research. Therefore it should be borne in mind that the pieces do not tell the true story based on any well -documented processes but have arisen out of the belief of the writer in his faith.

The dramatic pieces themselves are without any author's name. Jaber Anassori in the preface of his translation of the Taziyeh manuscripts collected by Enrico Ceruli points out:

"Scribes of Taziyeh , generally, ask readers to pray for them out of mercy. They complete their plays asking for forgiveness or for praise and redemption. At the end of most Taziyeh manuscripts could be seen these words: "The end, finished."; along with the signature or the finger print of the writers, in the corner of the last page of the manuscripts. Sometimes writers explained or mentioned that this manuscript had been composed for sake of the memory of the writer...or based upon the order of his or hers...

It was custom amongst writers to bring a suffix or an inscription after their names such as " was written by the porter of the Imam Hussein's court". Or; "It was written at four hours after midnight. While I was sleepy. *Molah Gholam Hussein* the son of the late *Molah Sharif*."

"On Wednesday , the third day of the New Year, in a blue mood and indigence I composed this Majlis. I wish to see nobody in this miserable situation which is the worst thing in the life. These few words as a memorial were written."

"On Thursday , the sixteenth of *Safar*(the second month of Lunar Hijri), in *Lahijan* in the house of *Molah Reza*, the producer of Taziyeh, in the company of forty players of Taziyeh of *Qazvin*,

Reza Bovaini, Haj Ebrahim, Mokhalef Khan, who played the antagonist, were sitting while some of us were talking and others were napping. We expected to see *Ali Gholi*, in time, who had gone to buy fresh bread for lunch. This damned fool has not come back yet. These words as a memorial were written. God bless and give joy to all readers. *Mohammad Sharif, Imam Khan.*"²

Victor Turner has pointed out, "such public events as elections, demonstrations, and public meetings have their performative and ritualistic aspects. These "social dramas" likewise aim to achieve a change in a state of affairs through specific performance. Following this line of reasoning, we see that events like the Taziyeh hold a place somewhere between the sacred and the secular in all cultures." Beeman in the continuation of this subject-matter adds: "they are "liminal" events in Turner's sense of the word. Thus, through the study of the Taziyeh as performance, rather than strictly as literature or history, we are in a position to turn the tables on the focal concerns of earlier studies and use analysis of the Taziyeh as a tool for investigation of both the sacred and secular worlds within which it is contained."³

While Metin And believes that the home of Taziyeh is Iran⁴ he hints at the existence of Taziyeh in other areas like Lebanon⁵, Iraq, Azarbaijan and

² The translation of Elenco Di drammi Religiosi Persiani(Fondo Mss. Vaticanicerulli) by Anassory, Jaber Gostaresh-e Honar Publication Co, Tehran 1989., p.22.

³ Beeman, William, O "A Cultural Dimensions of Performance Conventions in Iranian Taziyeh" (Article No:3) Taziyeh/ Ritual and Drama in Iran ed, Chelkowski, Peter. J New York, 1979., p.25.

See also Victor Turner, The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967); and The Ritual Process (Chicago: Aldine, 1969).

⁴ And, Metin Drama at the Crossroads Turkish Performing Arts Link Past and Present, East and West, The Isis Press Istanbul Turkey, 1991., p.115.

⁵ There are two important Shi'a(Ithna'ashari, Twelve-Imam Shiism see also note 15 chapter two) communities in the Arab countries, beside Iraq, that have not received much attention by scholars who deal with the general topic of Shi'ism. These are the

Eastern Turkey.⁶ We could also add India ⁷, Pakistan and Afghanistan to his list.

closely -knit Shi'a community of Jabal' Amin in South Lebanon, and the more diversified Shi'a groups of the Qatif region, Bahrain, and Al-Hasa on the Arab side of the Persian Gulf...

The great Shi'a dimension of the Islamic tradition has with time developed a more human, folk-Islamic popular aspect preserved in the Hussein-Karbela-Ashura-Taziyeh complex. Away from the formalism of the scholars, this aspect of Shi'a Islam has survived over the centuries and has kept Shi'ites of all countries united in their search for a more meaningful expression of their everyday life...

Taziyeh proper, the practice in south Lebanon with its center in the hilly town of Nabatiylah, is said to have been a recent nineteenth-twentieth century import from Iran. It is difficult to document this, but perhaps it can be explained on the basis of the ostracised position of Jabl' Amil during the long Ottoman period of three centuries. The 'Amils' after losing another Shahid, (Zain al-din al-'Amil' al Shahid al-Thani;) naturally looked to Iraq and Iran for guidance. Mazzaoui, Michel M. "Shi'ism and Ashura In South Lebanon." (Article No: 18) Taziyeh/ Ritual and Drama in Iran, ed Chelkowski New York., 1979. pp.228-235.

⁶ Taziyeh performance and elaborate Muharram processions are to be found among the Turks, especially among the Azarbaijan Turks of Caucasia and there are some extant manuscripts of Taziyeh plays in Turkish. For instance, out of 1054 Taziyeh manuscripts in Vatican collection, 35 are in Turkish, only 4 are in Arabic, and the rest are in Persian. Yet in Anatolia there is no tradition of Taziyeh performances, since the Sunni element is predominant there. Also in the traditional Anatolia Turkish theatre, tragedy does not exist, comedy being considered the only acceptable form of dramatic art. However, both at the urban and rural levels there is a great variety of dramatic forms. In the large towns the most usual dramatic performances are Ortaoyunu, popular improvised comedies which very much resemble the Taziyeh performances, in the style in which they are presented and in their form and staging. And, Metin "The Muharram Observances in Anatolia Turkey" (Article No:19) Taziyeh / Ritual and Drama in Iran , ed Chelkowski , New York, 1979., p.238.

⁷ India , which has a very large population of Muslims, is famous for the great zeal with which the martyrdom of Imam Hussein is observed by Muslims and Hindus alike. This observance, however, is not at all like the Iranian practice, which centers in the ritual theatre, the Taziyeh. In this unique dramatic presentation, performers and spectators alike participate in the reenactment of the tragedy of Karbela. The word Taziyeh has a different connotation in India, referring not to the theatre, the drama presented on its stage, but to an actual object, a small reproduction of the tomb of Hussein . This is carried in Muharram processions accompanied by various symbolic devices which illustrate the Karbela legends.

The practice of *Taziyeh-dari* (Taziyeh ceremonies) was first introduced in India by Timur-Lang, the Mughal Emperors firmly established it as a custom, which gradually became popular with the masses. The parade or procession became a spectacular event evoking great interest and religious fervour.

We read in the Cambridge Guide to World Theatre :

"Religious epic theatre, Taziyeh or Shabih, continues to be performed in areas of the Middle East with a large Shi'a populations: Iran, Iraq, Southern Lebanon and Bahrain. Nevertheless, the most elaborate, full-blown performances of Taziyeh continued (sic) to be performed in Iran. Performances of Taziyeh are given both by professional troupes of players and by villagers in amateur performances. Many small towns and villages have erected special buildings, *Hoseinieh* (see appendix No:one), specially for the performances of mourning ceremonies during the month of Muharram."⁸

Chelkowski in the light of the Taziyeh as the Iranian religious play remarks:

"The Taziyeh of Iran is ritual theatre and derives its form and its content from deep-rooted religious traditions. But although it is Islamic in appearance, it is strongly Persian, drawing vital inspiration from its special political and cultural heritage. Its genius is that it combines immediacy and flexibility with universality. Uniting rural folk art with urban, royal entertainment, it admits no barrier between the archetype and the human, the wealthy and the poor, the sophisticated and the simple, the spectator and the actor. Each participates with and enriches the other."⁹

Mehdi Forough recognises Taziyeh as a part of a national Iranian drive* which has never attained sufficient independence from ritual to form a dramatic literature.¹⁰

Jaffri, Syed Hussein Ali "Muharram Ceremonies in India" (Article No:17) Taziyeh / Ritual and Drama in Iran , ed Chelkowski pp .222-227.

I observed a simple Ashura ceremony in Muharram 1993 in Clifton Mosque in Birmingham.(R. A-M)

⁸ Banham , Martin Cambridge Guide to World Theatre Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 1988 pp.670-671.

⁹ Chelkowski, Peter Taziyeh indigenous avant-garde Theatre of Iran Tehran, NIRT Publication , 1975., p.4.

¹⁰ Forough , Mehdi A Comparative Study of Abraham's Sacrifice in Persian Passion play and Western Mystery play , Tehran, nd p4 and p.44*.

Taziyeh ,after its birth, by a figural view of time allows Karbela to appear as a tableau-vivant juxtaposed within a variety of plays. Peter Chelkowski in his examination of the Taziyeh in Iran remarks: "Taziyeh is a complex subject involving many disciplines such as religious, history, literature, anthropology, psychology, sociology, music and fine arts as well as drama and theatre."¹¹

The word Taziyeh encompasses several aspects of meaning. It is understood to embrace mourning, lamentation and reminiscing or retaining a memory of the dear one.¹² As mentioned, the Taziyeh has its origin in the Muharram processions commemorating Imam Hussein's martyrdom or the dramatic representation of the event of Karbela. The word *Shabih*(Imitation), which is the formalist definition, is more comprehensive than the word *Taziyeh*, but both have approximately the same connotation (Religious Tragedy and Mourning). Thus the players in Taziyeh are called *Shabih Khan* as imitation is an element of their performance. Within the troupes of performers, there are individual titles for the players, such as *Imam Khan* , the name of one of the saint's group and *Shemr Khan*, one of the villains. *Imam Khan* is the performer who recites the verses of Imam and represents his character and *Shemr Khan* is the one who recites the verses of *Shemr*.

¹¹ Chelkowski, Peter J "Bibliographical spectrum" (Article No:20) Taziyeh/ Ritual and Drama in Iran, New York, 1979., p.255.

¹² Taziyeh or Taziyat and Majlies-e Taziyeh were not generally used in the context of early Islamic social traditions to mean mourning or a gathering of mourners at the death of ordinary individuals; they were used in connection with the mourning ceremonies of Ashura which included condolences(Taziyat) for Hussein. Baktash Mayel "Taziyeh and its Philosophy " (Article No:8) Taziyeh/ Ritual and Drama in Iran. ed, Chelkowski , New York 1979., p.96.

The theme of Taziyeh is a confrontation between good and evil¹³. Therefore Taziyeh as a religious play includes a pattern of stories dedicated to religious acts, the pattern of which seems to exist in an almost uniform way in all religions and religious art. This pattern is observed in Taziyeh in the form of "Saints and Devils" and their confrontation. Saints believe in the next world whereas Devils think only of the advantages of the mortal world.

"The audience knows the story perfectly, or at least they have heard about it, and this situation obviates the need for any exposition of character development in the plays. There is no need for the author of the Taziyeh to supply any significant details about the background of the action, the setting, or the personality of the characters. The evil characters know that they are evil and often say so,¹⁴ while the good characters all know in advance the outcome of their actions, and often refer to this. Thus, in the core plays of the Taziyeh much time can be spent on such emotional scenes as tearful leave-taking and lamentations."¹⁵

The extension of these scenes *intensifies the emotion felt by the audience*.

Exaggerating the truth and emphasising the biased representation of saintly and villainous characters gives potential motifs to the writer and provides impulses for the actors of the Taziyeh. Nevertheless nothing must repel the audience and all is contained within the smooth, elegant framework and style and the epic sweep which characterise the Taziyeh performances.

13 The Taziyeh narrative is the eternal story of the oppressed and the oppressor, the brave and the coward, the ascetic and the corrupt, the future life and the material world, heaven and hell: the story of good and evil. Mamnoon, Parviz "Taziyeh from the Viewpoint of the Western Theatre" (Article No:12) Taziyeh/ Ritual and Drama in Iran ed Chelkowski New York 1979., p.161.

14 Abu Khalid: I am the one who committed crimes
In the desert of Karbela.
The performance of the Majlis of Mokhtar., Tekiyeh Mehrab, Tehran, 1992.

15 Quoted Hanaway, J. R. William "Stereotyped Imagery in the Taziyeh" (Article No:14) Taziyeh / Ritual and Drama in Iran ed; Chelkowski, New York , 1979., pp.187-188.

The staging conditions of the Taziyeh

a; Acting and Performing

The recital of the epic verses or *Rajaz-Khani* (recitation of verse)-remaining from the recitation of the *Epic of the king (Shshnameh)*¹⁶- is one of the more conventional forms used in the plays. For example, two characters from each party, one from the group of saints and one from the group of villains, on opposite sides of the stage, challenge and cast their lineage in each other's teeth in the form of declamation while they make a turn round the platform once every so often.¹⁷

In the performance of the Majlis of Hamza, in Tekiyeh Mehrab directed by Hashem Fayyaz in 1992 we see two characters of each side stand against each other. First the two characters of the side of enemy ,one by one, start to

¹⁶ An epic book written by Ferdowsi. see chapter three.

¹⁷ The Taziyeh writers have taken this kind of scene from Iranian epic literature, especially the *Shahnameh*. The declaimed challenge occurs before the beginning of man-to-man combat between two champions. In it each of the parties harangues the other with a description of his own formidable deeds, greatness, and heroism, as well as those of his fathers and ancestors. In Taziyeh too, both the hero and the villain recall their own honours, but with one difference- during the challenge of the hero his proud tone is suitable to his generous deeds and appropriate to his character, while the challenge of the villainous person, like Shemr, though he too refers to his deeds and qualities in the same proud voice, in fact they are marks of his meanness, vileness, and baseness. An excerpt from the challenge of Shemr in the Majlis of Abbas:

Shemr : I who am the slave at your banquet
and your liege in your palace,
Standing submissively, I am the obedient Servant of this sovereign.
At times I am ill-omened, at times bitter, at times a lie, at times water; at times I Am
dust, at times as sweet as rock suger, at times I am like the venom of the Serpent.
I am the calamity of Kerbela, the offspring of menstruation and adultery.
Look upon me; I have seven nipples upon my chest like a dog.

Mamnoun, Parviz op. cit., p.166.

introduce their courage and strength while believing in their superiority in talent, affection and bravery over the opposite side, Ali and Hamza, in the form of rhetoric. When they have finished their declamation, Ali and Hamza start to present their view of the enemy and also their own position, of course without complimenting the enemy.

The method of acting and exposition is replete with the conventions of *Naghali* (story-telling). For instance, stamping, clapping on speech stresses. When one of the enemies seeks to incarnate his army he stands on tip-toe, throwing out his arms and he portrays the army roaring. When it is intended, in the bright scene of Tekiyeh, to represent a dark night, it is sufficient to utilise devices to assume a dark night. Groping one's way is one example of this. Characters lost in a desert or suffering from the rays of the sun are shown thus: The actor shades his eyes and peers into the distance, signifying he is suffering from the shining of the sun.

The actors have more freedom and flexibility in their movements and actions than those in conventional theatre. They are at liberty to change the scene of action. To do this they simply move around to another corner of the stage, into the aisle, or even, if deemed to be necessary, climb the wall of the Tekiyeh and continue the show on the roof.¹⁸

In representing the characters in the plays, the players are very careful to maintain distance between themselves and the characters they represent, and to make this clear to the audience. In addition to this the players in Taziyeh cannot hide their feelings of veneration for Imam Hussein and his family, nor can they disguise their feelings of vilification for Yazid and his cronies, whom they play.

¹⁸ Quoted Forough ,M op. cit, p.29.

"Nor can the Taziyeh player, who is also a believing Shi'ite, ever permit himself to become one with the Imam, an act which would in his opinion be blasphemy. This situation also pertains in the playing of the villains. The distance between the actor and the person of the villain is clear and unavoidable, first because the inherent loathing and repulsion which the Shi'ite actor feels for Yazid and Shemr is so strong that any artistic desire to identify with the character is nullified. Secondly, the behaviour of Yazid and Shemr toward the Imam is inhuman and unbelievable and they have been converted into such monsters, that it would be impossible for any man to portray them realistically. Therefore the only thing a Shi'ite Taziyeh player desires, and in principle is able to do, is visibly to impersonate Hazrat-e Hussein and Ali, and Shemr (may he be cursed), to allude to their personalities, to recall their existence, and nothing more. This distance between the actor and the role in Taziyeh is so obvious that if (as recently happened in several Taziyeh) a player refers directly to this separation, his action must be considered inappropriate and seen as the influence of new theatrical ideas. In Natanz, for example, one Mr. Sulaimani, playing Abbas, recited an ode that he himself had composed. In the middle of it he emphasised the separation between himself and the character he was playing:

I am not Abbas; neither is this Karbela,
I am Sulaimani, the slave of the King of heavenly power.¹⁹

Count Gobineau says:

"The actor is under a charm; he is under it so strongly and completely that almost always one sees Yazid himself (the usurping caliph), the wretched Ibn-Sâd (Yazid's general), and the infamous Shemr (Ibn-Sad's lieutenant), at the moment they vent the cruelest insults against the Imams, whom they are going to massacre, or against the women of the family of Imam, whom they are ill-using, burst into tears and repeat their part with sobs. The public is neither surprised nor displeased at this; on the contrary, it beats its breast at the sight, throws up its arms towards heaven with invocations of God, and redoubles its groans."²⁰

¹⁹ Mamnoun, Parviz "Taziyeh From The Viewpoint of the Western Theatre (Article No:12) Taziyeh/ Ritual and Drama in Iran ,. ed, Chelkowski p.158.

²⁰ Quoted Arnold, Matthew Essay In Criticism (Chapter of A Persian Passion Play), Macmillan and Co, St Martin's London 1932., pp.239-240.

This fact can be considered as one of the most important characteristics of Taziyeh²¹ since both sides, the actors and audience are aware of the event of Karbela. Hereupon there is nothing that must be held away from the audience's sight.

Let us look at one example of how alienation contributes to the intensification of emotion.

"In Darband (Caucasia) no one wanted to appear in the role of Shemr. After a great deal of searching, the producers of the Taziyeh finally found a Russian labourer who knew a few words of Persian and was ready, for a sum, to play the role of the killer of Imam Hussein. The Taziyeh directors, considering the Russian labourer's circumstances, shortened Shemr's part as far as was possible. In reality he was only to wear Shemr's costume and stand beside a wooden tub representing the Euphrates River, not allowing anyone to approach it. As the time for his performance approached, the labourer put on Shemr's costume and, taking a whip in hand, stood by the tub. The children and companions of Imam Hussein one by one tried to approach the water while the labourer assiduously kept them away. Unfortunately the person playing the role of Imam Hussein was an old and respected elder. When he neared the water, the Taziyeh director saw, to his astonishment, that the labourer never even tried to prevent him from reaching the water according to the demands of his role;

²¹ The roles of Taziyeh, contrary to the claims made, are neither absolutely bad and absolutely good, nor absolutely white and absolutely black. Passing over the character of Hurr who is black in the beginning and white at the end- he goes from one extreme to the other- sometimes there are parts in the Taziyeh in which the characterisation is not as simplistic as has been stated. Among the villains, for example, while Shemr is the shameless offspring of adultery who opposes the Imam, another of the commanders of the army of Ibn-sâd, Senan, who had volunteered to kill Imam Hussein before Shemr had come forward to do it, has some understanding of shame and decency. When he draws his dagger and moves toward the Imam he looks in the Imam's eyes, and he is ashamed of what he is about to do. Casting the dagger aside, he turns back, for he has seen the image of Hussein's mother, Zahra the daughter of the Prophet, in Hussein's eye. The personality of Ibn Sâd himself, one of the most important of the negative characters, in a few Taziyehs sometimes oscillates between white and black. Mamnoun, Parviz op. cit., p.160.

instead he called out to him to drink without any fear or anxiety. The Taziyeh director shouted at the Russian not let the old man get near the water, but the labourer humbly replied, "Let him drink; he is an old man!"

This incident was not the occasion for consternation or astonishment among the audience and it did not cause laughter; on the contrary it was a strong stimulus to even greater and warmer weeping and tears. The sobbing spectators said, "See! How mean and evil Shemr was! He showed mercy neither to the children nor to Imam Hussein who was the grandson of the Prophet. He killed them, but when the Russian fellow who was outside the faith saw the old actor with a white beard he showed him mercy and permitted him to quench his thirst."²²

The actors of Taziyeh, both sides sacred or evil characters, believe that they are not playing the role of the sacred or evil individuals involved within the tragedy of Karbela. Rather they believe they are narrators who make a massive efforts towards creating, and ,then, transferring the mood and feeling of the

²² Quoted Mahjub, M "The Effect of European Theatre and the Influence of its Theatrical Methods Upon Taziyeh" (Article No:11) Taziyeh/ Ritual and Drama in Iran ed; Chelkowski. pp.146-147.

Mamnoun also writes: " we must not ascribe the Taziyeh player's reading from his script while acting to slovenliness in his work; this is itself a direct reference to the "representation", to the actor being a "reader". We must not think the intrusion of directors and other non-acting persons in the performance, the traffic of people taking a short-cut across the stage, the drinking of tea and water by the actors even while acting out a play in which the heroes are all panting from thirst, the playing of the role of Zainab by a powerfully built, rough-voiced man, the weeping of the actor playing the part of the Imam for the predicament of the Imam, the weeping of Shemr for the Imam and his praying for the sponsor of the assembly in the name of the King of the Thirsty (this Shemr who is just about to separate the Imam's head from his body), and other examples of this sort to be proof of the weakness of Taziyeh or of its rudeness. For all these actions and motions are the most beautiful and perfected effect of keeping distance from the characters, which at times remarkably enhances the power and effectiveness of the performance. When the spectator sees that even Shemr has tears in his eyes for the oppressed Imam he is twice as upset and gives way to even greater weeping under the influence of the performance. And finally we must not mock the exaggerated gestures and the "affectedness" of Taziyeh players, for these gestures are the very ones which Brecht recommended to the artists of the narrative Theatre under the name of "Allgemeine Gestus".

Mamnoun P. op. cit., p.159.

actual events of the day of Ashura in the sight of their audience. In other terms they try to bring the history of Karbela to life.

The villain actors have this ability to revive a most delicate feeling in the audience or cause them to move to tears, by showing a harsh action or tone towards the protagonists. The actors of both poles weep for Imam Hussein during the short course of offering the tragedy of Karbela. Even while the play is in progress any actor might ask audience or other actors for a cloth or handkerchief to wipe his tears.

The actor of Taziyeh in his break time sits amongst the audience and while drinking tea or coffee talks to them. Even whilst acting the role he does not avoid returning the greetings of friends by waving or speaking without disrupting the integrity of the performance.

"Among Iranologists the story is circulated about a village gendarme playing the role of the Lion in Taziyeh. The fellow suddenly notices his captain in one of the boxes and while on all fours salutes him with his lion's paw".

Wirth continues:

"A Taziyeh actor can not "fall out of the roll" because he does not identify with it, but carries it in the way the village gendarme carried the skin of the lion. Therefore the "role carrier" keeps his own identity intact and can react at any time in his capacity as a non-performer."²³

Peter Brook writes: "In the Taziyeh there is no attempt, theatrically speaking , to do anything too well: the acting does not demand characterisations that are too complete, detailed or realistic."²⁴

²³ Quoted Wirth , Andrzej "Semiological Aspects of Taziyeh" (Article No:4) Taziyeh/Ritual and Drama in Iran, ed, Chelkowski, New York, 1979., p.38.

²⁴ Brook , Peter "The Ring of Harmonies" The Independent on Sunday-Arts, twenty first of November 1993. p.29.

It is a tradition to place the Imam and his family on the platform and his enemies outside, all round the platform. The family of the Imam never leave the platform while they are waiting to play their role, to signify they are under siege. When one of them leaves the platform it means he is going to take part in the war.

The martyrdom of the Imam Hussein is traditionally staged so that he is surrounded by a large number of enemies. As they attack him they mask his body from view. During this Shemr cries out loudly to the audience asking them to cry out for the martyrs of Karbela.

From the mass of enemies a pigeon is released which flies away representing either the soul of the Imam or a messenger presaging his death.

The surrounding of the Imam is the signal for the flight of his family and their capture by Ibn Sâd occurs simultaneously with the death of Imam Hussein. Whilst capturing the family, the actors portraying Ibn Sâd and his army weep whilst pulling the fugitives to the floor. In the end the director arrives and signals to the actors the end of the action. Then he prays for the people present and all activists and announces the name of the Taziyeh to be performed on the next day.

The passing of time, distance between two locations and a long journey are shown conventionally, by turning round the platform once or twice. When an actor departs from a point or origin towards a destination he will announce the name of the location on his arrival. For instance in the Majlis of the Martyrdom of Imam Hussein, the Imam travels through the distance between the desert of Karbela to the jungles of India in a twinkling of an eye. No time is wasted on scene shifting, changes are effected by simple description or are left to the imagination of the audience. Andrzej Wirth remarks:

"Past, present and future coexist simultaneously in the Taziyeh performance. There is also no specific locality, but all localities are presented simultaneously on its arena stage, which is die Weltbiihne in a sense similar to the Western morality play tradition."²⁵

Each actor holds his script in his hand despite his knowing it. There is no embarrassment in reading from the text and the conventions of performance are such that nothing is disturbed if an actor forgets his lines. The Ostad also has the script with him, in his shawl, out of way of the action, so that if one of the actors loses his script he will be able to offer a copy to him. Sometimes he holds the script to prompt the actors.²⁶

The Ostad²⁷ is present during the course of the performance. He might beckon the actors to stop the show for a short while. Then he addresses the spectators, recalling the most stirring events of the story, intent on attracting the attention of audience. Thereafter he demands their sympathy for what is passing before them. And also he asks their compassion²⁸ and tears for martyrs. At

²⁵ Wirth, Andrzej op. cit., p.33.

²⁶ The players read their roles from strips of paper held in their hands, the parts are not welded together in a common script, but are maintained as separate scripts, with cuelines. Mostawfi, Abdullah, The Historical and Administrative History of the Qajars (Tehran, 1955) p.390.

²⁷ De Lorey writes: " In brief, Ostad (charagus) is the Deus ex machina of the Taziyeh. Queer Things about Persia Eveleigh Nash London 1907. p.284.

²⁸ Gobineau describes thus: " The theatre is filled, and the heat is great; young men of rank, the king's pages, officers of the army, smart functionaries of states, move through the crowd with water-skins slung on their backs, dealing out water all round, in memory of the thirst which on these solemn days the Imams suffered in the sands of Kerbela. Wild chants and litanies, such as we have already described, are from time to time set up by a dervish, a soldier, a workman in the crowd. These chants are taken up, more or less, by the audience; sometimes they flag and die away for want of support sometimes they are continued till they reach a paroxysm, and then abruptly stop. Presently a strange, insignificant figure in a green cotton garment, looking like petty tradesman of one of the Teheran Bazaars, mounts upon the sakou. He beckons

the end of his intervention he signals the restart of the show. When one of the actors is going into his last combat the director will dress him in his winding sheet or, giving him a sword, hold the stirrup for him to mount his horse and insert a supply of chopped straw into the hands of those who are about to use it. All these do not disturb the imagination of the audience. The Ostad, himself, might play a role of a character if it became necessary.

The process of the fighting has been coordinated with the sounds of the clashing of cymbals and the beating of drums. In the first step two characters stand face to face and feint to attack but they do not. In the next step they cross each other side by side. Immediately they turn and start fencing.

with his hand to the audience, who are silent directly, and addresses them in a tone of lecture and expostulation, thus:

"Well, you seem happy enough, Mussulmans, sitting there at your ease under the awning; and you imagine Paradise already wide open to you. Do you know what Paradise is? It is a garden, doubtless, but such a garden as you have no idea of. You will say to me: 'Friend, tell us what it is like'. I have never been there, certainly; but plenty of prophets have described it, and angels have brought news of it. However, all I will tell you is, that there is room for all good people there, for it is 330,000 cubits long. If you do not believe, inquire. As for getting to be one of the good people, let me tell you it is not enough to read the Koran of the Prophet (the salvation and blessing of God be upon him); it is not enough to do everything which this divine book enjoins; it is not enough to come and weep at the Tazyas, as you do every day, you sons of dogs you, who know nothing which is of any use; it behoves, besides, that your good works (if you ever do any, which I greatly doubt) should be done in the name and for the love of Hussein. It is Hussein, Mussulmans, who is the door to paradise; it is Hussein, Mussulmans, who upholds the world; it is Hussien, Mussulmans, by whom comes salvation. Cry, "Hassan Hussein"

And all the multitude cry: "O Hussein! O Hussein!" "And now", the strange speaker goes on, "pray to God to keep you continually in the love of Hussein. Come, make your cry to God". Then the multitude, as one man, throw up their arms into the air, and with a deep and long-drawn cry exclaim: "Ya Allah! O God!"

Fifes, drums, and trumpets break out; the Kernas, great copper trumpets five or six feet long, give notice that the actors are ready and that the Tazya is to commence. The preacher descends from the Sakou, and the actors occupy it".

Arnold, M op. cit, PP.243-244.

It is tradition to represent a wounded character in a winding-sheet when he is going to fight. He leaves the Tekiyeh and an enemy chases him off. When he returns back to the Tekiyeh he is in a bloody and torn sheet.

To break the news of a character's death a variety of conventional methods are used. Among them there is the literary symmetry, found in the old Persian literature, which is the returning of a riderless horse to the scene.(See figure No: one)

As with Medieval and Elizabethan theatre, the actors are men and boys, who play all the parts, including those of angels and women. The children who appear in the piece usually represent the children of the principal families. Their appearance in this solemn religious enactment is thought to bring a blessing upon them and their parents.

To use a poetic expression, their acting evokes the proverbial 'well of emotion' and it is easy, but wrong, to say they merely observe specific conventions in the process of performing. Characters of the Taziyeh are known a priori and the writer personally elaborates or exaggerates aspects of their nature.

Not only does the actor endeavour to imitate the tone of voice, words and characteristics of the person, he also dons costumes in particular colours which are synonymous with the audience's perception of the character. Those playing the role of the Imam usually wear clothes (including a cloak) and turban of green and white while Shemr and his assistant usually wear red outfits. Their costumes consist of a coat of mail and helmet adorned with swan feathers. DeLorey describes the characters of the Taziyeh thus:

"He (the actor of Imam Hussein) was a full-grown man, whose tall figure towered over Kassem. Dressed in green, with an immense turban of the same colour, his face was covered with a square veil. Abbas dressed in a sort of shirt, stuck with arrows and smeared with

gore, to show the manner of his death. The Caliph Yazid, surrounded by his court and wives and the hated general, Ibn-Sâd and his lieutenant, Shemr, both murderers. All the richest stuffs, the most beautiful jewels, the most flashing armour were reserved for them, and made a strong contrast to the simplicity of the people of the Tent. The Caliph Yazid was personified by a man with a square beard; he wore a robe of silver cloth embroidered with gold palms.²⁹

Peter Chelkowski, while confirming this point, believes that today if no appropriate costume is at hand, any that differs from the usual dress of the audience is acceptable. But wherever possible, costume conforms to certain symbolic conventions. He writes: "In the western theatre the use of everyday dress for historical character has been practiced for some time as a shock device, but in Taziyeh it has been traditional"³⁰.

b; Design and Props in the Taziyeh

Design and setting in Taziyeh utilise a special technique. This unique technique may not be accepted by western theatre-goers or theatre designers. But Taziyeh-goers accept the convention easily. If asked why they would probably answer: "In fact we are not watching merely Taziyeh plays. What is being performed in front of our eyes is a kind of means by which we are able to strengthen our powers of imagination towards the creation of an incarnation of the real happening of Karbela." For this reason Taziyeh-goers are not surprised

²⁹ Eustache De Lorey, Queer Things about Persia Eveleigh Nash, London, 1907., pp.287-289.

³⁰ Chelkowski, Peter.J Taziyeh Indigenous avant-garde Theatre of Iran Festival of Arts Sourash Press Tehran, 1975., p.17.

when they see two actors holding a door, without any wall or anything else, as the door of the house of the Imam. Or when they see a chair in two separate scenes, as a throne in the court of Yazid and elsewhere as a humble object in the tent of the saints.

Props, except real ones such as swords, shield, lance, beads, are symbolic, for example a pot of water stands for river of Euphrates, the stem of a palm tree for a palm grove

"Minimal sets and props are used. Though decor is sparse, costumes and properties are not. Properties contain extremes of both realism and symbolism. The angel Gabriel holding an umbrella might suggest that he has descended from Heaven, and the actors find tomb, mosque, harem and camp where they are told to find them. Symbols are easily recognizable by the audience."³¹.

Taziyeh, like classical Greek drama and Elizabethan theatre, originally used few stage properties but as the Taziyeh evolved, and its popularity grew, these were introduced. With time these props became extremely elaborate, especially in the *Tekiyeh-Dowlat* (State play-house. I will introduce this Tekiyeh later in detail) which benefited from many important auxiliary elements.

"It is said that at a time when the performance of Taziyeh was on a grand scale the equipment on the scene like shields, swords studded with jewels were borrowed from the Royal museum. It is also added that the carriage which Napoleon had sent for Fath Ali Shah and eight horses pulling it was borrowed for one of the performance of Taziyeh for the use of Yazid and Shemr."³²

³¹ Quoted And, Metin Taziyeh, Tragedy In Islam Its Conventional and Ritualistic Elements, Its Dramatic Values with Reference to Greek Tragedy and its Significance for the Modern Theatre. International Theatre Year Book 1970., p.39.

³² See Homayouni, Sadegh Taziyeh in Iran Shiraz, Navid Publisher, 1989., pp.81-82.

"Originally, Taziyeh props were casual, and while some of them had optical benefit, others had decorative significance, or symbolic importance. The first props consisted of a sword and cymbal, after which facsimiles of impaled doves, flags and corpses were introduced. A third development brought about the inclusion of a bowl of water, representing the Euphrates, or a river; a palm leaf, or symbol of a palm tree; an agate ring, symbolising a spring, and a square represented the battle field."³³

As a whole what have been realised as Taziyeh props could be itemised as follows: Drum, Sword, Dagger, Boots³⁴, Water skin (or water container which is used by the character of Abbas.) Shield , which is one of the implements of warfare, Mail (mash chain mail), Helmet, Vessel (suspended by a chain and carried by a dervish), Head, Bowl of water, Veil, Clock, Scarf, Cymbals, Corpse, Harmonica(small one), Trumpet, Mace(club), Standard (flag), Rope, Bow and arrow, Lion skin³⁵ , Horse, Litter, Straw. The musical instruments are: Kettle-drums, cymbals, horns, clarinets and various trumpets.

Wirth gives his observations on the props of Taziyeh as follows:

"The props and the requisites are multifunctional, and semeiologically speaking " do read" differently accordingly to the way they are used. Hussein's bed becomes the bed of his

33 Quoted Homayouni, Sadegh Taziyeh and Taziyeh Khani Shiraz, Festival of Arts Series 1975., p.29.

34 Two colours for the two groups, namely, black for the sacred characters and red colour for villains.

35 In order to portray animals, lions for example, actual skins were utilized. In Tekiyeh Dowlat (the Government arena-like theatre especially constructed in Tehran for Taziyeh performances) in the Taziyeh *The Lion of Fasseh*, instead of a man dressed up in a lion skin, an actual lion was used. Shahidi, Anayatullah "Literary and Musical Development in the Taziyeh" (Article No:5) Taziyeh/ Ritual and Drama in Iran ed Chelkowskii, 1979., p.43.

general; a chair can , when the situation requires, signify a hill, and then again function as a chair".

Wirth has recognised some features as signs within Taziyeh. He has indexed them as follow:

"A) Symbolic signs are used such as:

- a1) Green versus red used as symbolic representation of Good(Hussein's party) and Evil (Yazid's party)
- a2) Throwing straw on one's head signifying sorrow.
- a3) A white Kafan(shroud) symbolising the approaching death of its wearer.

B) Stereotyped iconic signs include:

- b1) Shemr's finger at his lip signifying amazement, and hitting his thighs signifying anger.
- b2) Operatic gestures while singing.
- b3) Rhetorical gestures of addressing the House.
- b4) The posture of singing and speaking while on horseback.

C) Stereotyped index signs may be:

- c1) A handkerchief for stage crying.
- c2) An empty bowl or leather sack for lack of water.
- c3) Red spots of stage blood for wounds, etc."³⁶

Any group of Taziyeh provide their own props and outfits. They are usually kept in a poor condition, in a room of the house of the responsible member of the group or in a small store room of a mosque under the attention of the same member, despite the value of some of them. Sometimes some pieces of Taziyeh props or outfits, because of their multi functions, happen to be required by non- Taziyeh players but they are not obtained easily.

³⁶ Wirth, Andrzej op. cit., p.35.

c; Music in the Taziyeh

"I have seen Taziyeh in small Tekiyeh. There I have fully understood that Music, in religious plays, is of great significance. Since I was interested in this artistic technique I endeavoured to take part on any occasion of Taziyeh performances. I should point out that what causes people to be moved is the hearing of doleful songs sung by a singer with a fine voice. Though at this time, 1950 onwards, Taziyeh in terms of the musical point of view had considerably lost its significance." At any rate Khaleghi believes "Taziyeh is one of the best means of conserving and preserving many of the national Iranian tunes."³⁷

We read in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians on the music and its role in Taziyeh that:

"...A ta'ziye invariably includes dialogue between soloists representing the protagonists of the narrative and verses sung by the entire group. Variants of a single melodic pattern usually link several exchanges between soloists and group, each phrase incorporating repetitions, transpositions, or prolongations of smaller melodic shapes. Military instruments of Western origin (side drum, sometimes with trumpets) are occasionally used."³⁸

Ex.3 Ta'ziye, north Khorāsān; rec. and transcr. S. Blum

GROUP
Be-rā-dar, ha-rā-dar, ha-rā-dar, vā - - - i, vāi

SOLOIST
A-ciz-e del-e jā - ne khvā-har, vāi

SOLOIST
Tan-e tab zā - - - re - man

SOLOIST
Tan-e tab zā - - - re - man

GROUP
Na-dā-rad di-gar jā - qat-e tan - gr. Na-dā-rad di-gar jā - qat-e tan - gr. etc

Brother! Brother! Brother! Vai
Dearest! Heart! Soul! Sister! Vai
My body afflicted with a bitter fever!
No one else has power in adversity"

³⁷ Quoted Khaleghi, Rouhollah The story of Iranian Music, Tehran, 1974 p.332.

³⁸ The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians Vol nine p.299.

Shahidi introduces Kettle-Drums³⁹, Cymbals, Horns, Clarinets and various trumpets as Taziyeh instruments and believes: "Separating the music from the literature is not the most profitable way to study the Taziyeh". He adds: "we should always recognise the relationship between these basic components."⁴⁰ Nonetheless, here, I will briefly look at the modality of the role of music in the Taziyeh :

"Music through songs has an important role because a fine singer, in this genre of spectacle, can exert great influence upon the spectator. Because of this, young men with fine voices were often selected as apprentices, and served under a Master of Music, in preparation for a role in Taziyeh. This process was instrumental in producing men who were masters in the art of vocal technique.

Those who play saints must have a high pitch voice in order to sing the traditional notes(kies) of Iranian music whereas villains, merely need to shout rhythmically".⁴¹

The song designated to each actor depends on his rank and the part he plays on-stage⁴². The Imam-Khans have a pleasant and delicate tone to their

³⁹ Reza Badali writes: "A Drummer, in Taziyeh, stands in a corner of the stage in order to drum at any specified moment of the Majlis of Taziyeh for instance: **A:** In the event of changing the subject matter within the story of Taziyeh. **B:** In the end of any sorrowful moment. **C:** At the time of travelling a long way. **D:** The first drum is for the (cast) of Taziyeh making themselves ready to perform the show. **E:** The last drum is to give more impact of the event upon the spectators. He adds: "the number of drumming is approximately seven or nine". The Analysis of Taziyeh, section on the Merits of The Taziyeh, A leaflet published by The Center of Training Theatre of The Ministry of Islamic guidance, Ahwaz Division, Iran, 1986., P.8.

As Wirth remarks "the music in Taziyeh does not usually have any illustrative value and indicates transformations from one sequence to another. op. cit., p.36.

⁴⁰ Shahidi. A op. cit., p.41.

⁴¹ Ibid., This is not only shouting. Later we will see exactly what is appropriate for two group of actors.

⁴² Special songs were written which corresponded to the respective positions and titles of the protagonists. For example Hurr and Abbas were given tunes with rising epic-like melodies. Ali Akbar and Qasem were given *Chahar Ghah, Seh Gah* and

voices and sing their songs to sober and respectful tunes⁴³. In sensational episodes, characters use other kinds of songs with different melodies⁴⁴.

In the case of their opposite numbers, the evil antagonists have coarse and rude voices, and utter their vocals in a monotonous and unpleasant style. In this respect it is worth looking at Shahidi's comment on the skill and the technique of veteran performers in Taziyeh during the course of Taziyeh performances in *Tekiyeh Dowlat*. He writes:

"Master Taziyeh performers occasionally changed mode and tone as the action demanded. They even introduced unique rhymes and rhythms to the traditional dirges. The music, the voice, the face, the physique, and especially the particular role assigned to the performer were of prime importance to the spectators. Some veteran actors developed their own personal styles. These performers made unique contributions to the development of Taziyeh music. For example, some invented special methods of poetry recital. They developed excellent timing, an ability to lay stress on certain words and phrases, and an ability to rise or lower their voices along with many other theatrical gimmicks".⁴⁵

The actors selected to play in the Taziyeh are chosen because of their particular gift of oratory. While performing they must have the ability to

Isfahan modes while the Imam was given dignified serious tunes which, while sombre, communicated a sense of peace and hope (such as *Nava* mode). Shahidi adds: "Another unique feature is the use of symmetrical dialogue. For example, in a dialogue between Imam Hussein and Ali Akbar, if the Imam recites in one key, Ali Akbar has to use the same one. Shahidi op. cit., pp.43-44.

⁴³ Such as "*Chahar gah* mode" and "*Nava*" and "*Rahavi*" the names of *dastgah* (sing. *dastgah*: 'organisation') of Iranian music.

⁴⁴ "*Dashti*" and "*Shur*" the names of two *dastgah* of Iranian music. See also: Sadie, Stanley ed. The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians volume 9 London, Macmillan Publisher, 1980., pp.295-308 particularly pp. 300 and 301.

⁴⁵ Shahidi A op. cit., p.44.

extemporize in a poetic manner, which helps create a rapport between the producer and performer.

d; Language of the Taziyeh

Taziyeh generally begins with a prayer or elaboration on a biography of one of the Imams or their relatives.

"Taziyeh, in which the Imam or the prophet are presented in the opening scene, begins with their *Munajat* or prayer (protestations of their innermost secrets and wishes to God, the universe, or the heavens). In the early years only the Imam or the Prophet(the person playing the leadership role) performed this kind of prologue. Dialogue for the other protagonists was either straight narrative or in the question and answer format. In later years, however, a kind of *Munajat* was written for the kinsmen of the Imam, which from the stand-point of verse, meter, rhyme, and rhythm was similar to poetry written for the Imam. But this *Munajat* differed in content from the *Munajat* written for the Imam and for the prologues of early Taziyeh. The *Pish Khani* or prologue took the form of a song or a song-like wail which was presented in choral fashion. The child performers (or one of them) sang a special kind of tune(a poem with no rhythm and in childish tones). All the others antagonists and protagonists together, repeated the first couplet. This took place before the actual performance commenced in order to add a touch of resplendence and luster and to make the in-coming audience aware that the drama was about to begin".⁴⁶

Tracing the origin of the language of the Taziyeh, Malekpour has pointed to two prominent religious epics, Khavar-Nameh (The book of Orient)⁴⁷ and Hamleh-Haidari (Haidari attack)⁴⁸, as the first poetic sources ,

⁴⁶ Quoted Shahidi A op. cit., pp.57-58.

⁴⁷ Ibn-Hessam Kavarnamih (The book of Orient) The subject of which relates to the wars of his holiness Ali and his journey to Khavran, the battle with Gobad and the king of Kavar-Zamin and other imaginary happenings.

⁴⁸ Bazel Mohammed Rafat Haidari attack stone print 1847. The subject of the book refers to the life of his holiness Mohammed and his holiness Ali. The story of

linking their recitation in mourning ceremonies to the later development of the Taziyeh.⁴⁹

The poetic process has evolved into panegyric and the enthusiasm of later poets for this style of poetry has provided strong foundations for poetical expression in the Taziyeh.⁵⁰

The language of Taziyeh appears in the form of rhetorical poetry, dramatic dialogue and comedy, in the event of the presenting of comic Taziyeh.

Before suggesting any example based upon this latter appearance let us look at the quality of the poetic language of the Taziyeh.

Taziyeh language as a form of vernacular language is simple poetry. It is loose but full of common expressions and metaphors. In respect of Metaphor and the sophistication of the language of Taziyeh, Mehdi Forough remarks:

"A considerable amount of technical knowledge would be required as well- not only of prosody and grammar, but also of the various branches of rhetoric and euphemism - to recognize all the tropes, similes, metaphors, innuendoes, hyperbolas, antitheses, quotations, aetiologies, amphibologies, homonymies, anagrams and the like which abound in Persian literature"⁵¹.

this poem is the advent of Islam until the caliphate of Ali, the inflicting of injury on him and his death.

⁴⁹ Malekpour, Jamshid Persian Passion Play University of Tehran, 1987., p.24.

⁵⁰ The material from which the Taziyeh are composed is largely literary in origin. The compilers, most of whom are anonymous though a few are named, must have drawn on this stock, strung it together in various combinations, composed standard linking matter, added other non-literary embellishments, but in general contributed nothing original to the material on which they worked. What they can be credited with as original is the molding of the material into dramatic form. Sutton, L.P. "The Literary Sources of The Taziyeh" (Article No:13) Taziyeh/ Ritual and Drama in Iran, ed Chelkowski New York 1979., p.179.

⁵¹ Forough op. cit., p.2.

What Victor Turner wrote on his fieldwork among the Ndembu people of North-Western Zambia, could be confirmed in watching or studying Taziyeh for its specific allusions and metaphors. He writes:

"I could not analyse[these] ritual symbols without studying them in a time series in relation to other 'event' (regarding the symbol, too, as an 'event; rather a 'thing'), for symbols are essentially involved in social processes".⁵²

Unlike Forough, Arnold believes that:

"They are in popular language, such as the commonest and most ignorant of the people can understand, free from learned Arabic words, free, comparatively speaking, from Oriental fantasticality and hyperbole."⁵³

Generally, it is worth mentioning that Taziyeh language is not a language of pomp and splendour. On the contrary, it is an honest and sincere language. The poems express a strength of sensitivity without resorting to artificial conventions. However, having said this, the writer is at liberty to elaborate or reiterate as he feels necessary to elicit an emotional link between performers and spectators.

As the poetry is not composed by a single poet, it should be considered as a collection from different sources, full of literary errors and grammatical faults. But because of the simplicity and folkloric aspects of the poetry, it is considered to be an important method of communication when combined with dramatic art. In contrast to highly stylized Persian poetry Forough points out:

"The language of the Persian Passion plays, in general, is very simple and direct. No attempt is made to include the

⁵² Ritual to Theatre Performing Performing Arts Journal Publications 1982 New York p.21.

⁵³ Arnold, Matthew Essay in Criticism (Chapter of "A Persian Passion Play) Macmillan and Co, St, Martin's London, 1932., p.241.

artificial rhetorical devices and literary graces so abundant in most Persian poetry.⁵⁴

"The language of Taziyeh from the standpoint of literature never attracted the attention of men of letters. Those critics who have come to appreciate the Taziyeh as an art form consider its value to lie in its theatrical and cultural aspects. The poetry is viewed as slack, commonplace, and artless-doggerel which some feel has not progressed over the entire course of its history".⁵⁵

In spite of this Taziyeh writers, over the course of nearly two centuries, have been involved in a kind of evolutionary process and changes in order to improve the style of the poetry of Taziyeh, linking or making it similar to the elegiac mourning poetry of the Kajar period (unfortunately unsuccessfully).

Shahidi writes: "Early Taziyeh writers, because of their literary and intellectual limitations, resorted to market-place slang to express their emotions."

Then he suggests examples and adds:

"In an old manuscript of the Martyrdom of Abbas the dispute between Shemr and Ibn-Sâd appears more like an argument between two fools rather than a dispute between military commanders.

You dog, fear not Abbas the General.
There stands a man, Abbas, the brave,
If I should meet the son of Sâd tonight
I'll tell him, "Wait, you dog, 'till light." ⁵⁶

"Early Taziyeh poetry was generally written in a light verse style called *Masnavi*. One can say that the use of the *Masnavi* style is one of the distinctive characteristics of early scripts. The *Chakamah*(elegy), the *Mosammat*(Multiple poem) and the *Tarijih*(strophied poem) are among the various types of quatrains which inventive modern Taziyeh writers contributed to the poetic

54 Forough, Mehdi op. cit., P.80.

55 Shahidi op. cit., pp.45-46.

56 See Shahidi op. cit., pp.46.

arts. The addition of *Radif* format was another major contribution. Examples of this may be seen below in three different texts from the Taziyeh of the *Elder Fatemeh*. Fatemeh is speaking and the texts read as follows:

Old Text:

O Moslems, may hope spring from your loneliness,
I am alone and my friends mourn their loneliness.
Where is a comrade to inquire after me,
O woe is me, Woe betide me...

A later Text:

Lord, with father's departure my courage has fled,
Both quiet days and sleepless nights I dread,
Happy days, there are no more for me.
Since father has gone away from me.

Modern Tekiyeh Dowlat Text:

I am not well, a stranger in my homeland, O father, Other
than Jeddeh, I have no nurse, O father,
When you went to Kerbela, you failed to remember
That you left behind a sick daughter, O father.

Shahidi adds:

"Obviously the use of *Radif* (in prosody- a word following the rhyme)makes the task of the poet more difficult and proper word selection all the more onerous. But there are several benefits. First of all the poetry reads more easily and sounds better. Secondly, *Radif* greatly affects the music because, in recital, the last sounds can be drawn out and made more musical. Thirdly, it adds freshness and variety because the limitations of the format forces the poet to invent new rhetorical phrases to fit the meter. With free verse the average poet tends simply to regurgitate the thought and ideas of his predecessors. And finally, the use of *Radif* increases the number of metaphors and allusions."⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Shahidi op. cit., p.47.

Shahidi in the other part of his article points out that:

"Taziyeh poetry can be placed in two categories, the grandiose and the delicate. Words in the first category are to be found mainly in elegies, *mosammat* verse, and in combat descriptions and epic-like sections, while those in the second are used to express or describe grief."⁵⁸

Some Taziyeh writers plagiarised heavily in order to strengthen their poetical method. This occurred by borrowing phrases, changing a few hemstitches, adding or subtracting some couplets, from classical poets or another poet's work. Some writers overindulged themselves in imitating cited works.

Let us look at some examples of the quality of the measure of borrowing and adapting other literary works, offered by Shahidi. The following quotation which is attributed to an unidentified poet from *Saveh*, called *Savjeh*, has been taken from his version of the *Martyrdom of Abbas*. The last line is taken from the famous poet Sa'di.

I am Shemr who has eulogized you,
All mortal men I will host for you,
Now among my legions, now among our tents,
All this I have planned, all this is my desire for you.

An example of the overindulgence is cited below. In the example quoted, one of *Hafez's* lyric poems is stuck into the framework of *Mosammat* poem.

Abbas: O shameless infidel, how long will you your religion
ignore.
And sail a rudderless ship with no port in store.
Like me, you should willingly pass through our
Master's door.

58 Ibid., p.51.

Even though you be given a kingdom, this I implore,
Your wealth amounts to nothing.

Shahidi points out:

"Almost all the distiches of this famous Hafez *Qazal* have been borrowed in the form of *Mukhammas* (a poem in which the stanza consists of five hemstitches) with Abbas reciting the first strophe and Shemr the following. This poetry, while aesthetically pleasing, was little utilized in Taziyeh performances because the poet wanders far afield from the main subject of the play."⁵⁹

The following example shows how a writer has found a piece from other works. In the Taziyeh of the Imam (Tehran, Qazvin and perhaps other versions) what *Za'far Jena* recites is taken from *Tufan al-Buka*. But the response which the *Imam* gives to *Za'far* is taken from a poem by *Bidel* (Bidel Rudbari died in 1266/1850)

Za'far I am your most insignificant servant, Za'far Jena
Your service(sic) has arrived. The army of Jena....

Imam On this transitory earth, in this fleeting world
No man is ever immortal....⁶⁰

In conclusion, by suggesting examples, we will look at the modality of the appearance of poetical language of Taziyeh in form of rhetoric, dialogue and comedy as I have already introduced.

The first segment, as the first type, is a type of declamation in the form of rhetorical poetry setting out an invitation to combat.

Shemr enters the stage. He is returning from Kufa.

From Kufa I come with legions numerous,
To join Ibn Sâd, the Commander luminous,
This perfumed land, Ah, tis a sight to embrace

⁵⁹ Shahidi op. cit., p.51.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.55.

A barren desert turned into a market place
As if the antelope's musk spilled onto this plain
Or King Solomon laid down goods from his train.⁶¹

As the second type or dialogue form, Shahidi introduces the following passages attributed to Mirza Taqi al-Buka, who has mixed colloquial works and expressions with literary rhetoric by which he represents the very best of Taziye poetry. The dialogue takes place when Imam Hussein astride his horse, Zoljenah, and about to depart for the battlefield is confronted by his little daughter, Rughiyeh. She is standing on a raised area and cries out to her father. With no musical accompaniment and in heartrending, childish tones, she pleads with her father in broken, blank verse.

Rughiyeh: Father, you're going away, leaving me an orphan.

The Imam: O. Heaven, above, what trials have you wrought?

Rughiyeh: Father, after you're gone. Shemr will bind me up.

The Imam: He will bind you and your sisters with one chain.

Rughiyeh: Daddy, my throat is so parched I'm burning.

The Imam: I too am burning with thirst.

Rughiyeh: Father dear, let me tell you something.

The Imam: Tell me, don't cry. Rughiyeh, my little daughter.

Rughiyeh: Get down from your horse. I am sad.

The Imam: (dismounting and walking toward Rughiyeh)
May the Lord have mercy on the Shi'ites, my little darling.

Rughiyeh: Draw an emblem on your battledress to serve as my light.

The Imam: (caressing Rughiyeh)
My eyes. O light of my eyes. my little one, my little prisoner.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.46.

Rughiyeh: Let me go father, I'll kiss you under your throat.
(She kisses him under his throat)

The Imam: Kiss me, O my soul. I am a sacrifice to all your hopes and dreams.⁶²

I have selected a section of the majlis of "The Death of Fatimah" from the translation of Pelly. The scene shows Ali and Fatimah are talking about the tiding of the events of Karbela.

Ali O Zahra, about what art thou so busy?

Fatimah O Ali, I am combing my daughter's hair.

Ali Put a veil on her face, that day and night may continue their
regular courses.

Fatimah I have nothing to do, man, with day and night.

Ali The sun is ashamed to show his face while that of Zainab is laid
open to view.

Fatimah But, alas! this same Zainab's hair shall become full of blood.

Ali Oh! shall Zainab indeed become acquainted with grief?

Fatimah Yes; and this her head shall be broken by the wood of the litter,
when led away as a captive.

Ali Will the hand of cruelty be stretched against her?

Fatimah Yes; in Kufah they will cast stones at her.

Ali Oh! shall she be deprived of the pleasures of life?

Fatimah Ah! she shall be spurned by the daughters of Sham.

Ali Will she , truly, be subject to contempt at the hands of her
enemies?

Fatimah Yes; they will pass her through the bazaars with uncovered head,
and so disgrace her.

⁶² Shahidi op. cit., pp.51-52.

Ali From whom hast thou heard these predictions?

Fatimah From the holy mouth of the prophet himself.

Ali O Fatimah! thou worthy companion of mine! thou peace of my
troubled! thou hapless, friendless sufferer, the whole of whose
body looks sickly, like the eye itself! Thou from every eye-lash of
whom a flood of tears continually runs down; tell me, dear wife,
what kind of fruit dost thou like most?

Fatimah O Lion of God, and the high priest of His people, my father, the
Prophet of God, has charged me not to drink water when I am
body is parched, though my heart should burn with thirst. Since my
flames with seized with a very hot fever, I should like to quench its
a little piece of some pomegranates.⁶³

Andrzej Wirth holds a different view on the language of Taziyeh. He does not believe that the conversation between characters should be recognised as a dramatic dialogue. He writes: "Taziyeh librettos which seem to be based on the colloquy, appear in the performance as discourse". Then he makes a distinction between dialogue and discourse in Taziyeh and adds: "In a dialogue we observe a communicative action of the dialogue partners." Prior to this he has said:

"All the Taziyeh operas are based on discourse ,which has no dramatic time, in a philosophical sense (Shi'a beliefs), in an aesthetic sense (naiveté as an aesthetic category). An ideal Taziyeh performance has the structure of a discourse which can be analysed in semiological terms as a communicative system based on two codes, an audio-visual and as perceptual code. The first code defines the modality of acting; the latter, the modality of viewing. In this system the spectator- believer becomes a co-narrator himself. Thus the interplay of the two codes is the most original aspect of the Taziyeh".⁶⁴

⁶³ Pelly op. cit., (vol one) pp.122-123.

⁶⁴ Wirth, Andrzej "Semiological Aspects of Taziyeh" (Article No:4) Taziyeh/ Ritual and Drama in Iran. p.33.

The scope for presenting comedy in Taziyeh is limited. The essential motive for creating a comic scene comes mostly from a wish to ridicule the antagonists by making them appear to be buffoons. Hereupon, the spectator of Taziyeh , who is sore hearted with the enemy of the House of the Prophet is lifted up when he sees the enemy made abject. In the other terms the Taziyeh spectator revenges himself upon the enemy with a boisterous laugh.

In the performance of the Majlis of *Mokhtar* , 1992, we see the son of Ibn Sâd mourning upon the dead body of his father in comic form. It should be pointed out Hashem Fayyaz, the director, has made this Majlis more enjoyable for the interest of his spectators.

The son of Ibn Sâd: O you Mokhtar, The brave man.
I fear of you
you have made me an orphan.
(he picks up the head of his father)
Oh my dear father
I am ready to die for your ass like head.
Oh my dear father.
I am ready to die for your boar like teeth....

The content and order of Majlises of Taziyeh(during the ten days)

Colonel Sir Lewis Pelly in his two volume book called *The Miracle play of Hasan and Husain* has introduced a list of plays and plot outlines, of which most important ones, based upon the history of the events of Karbela and successive performances, are:

Volume One:

The Martyrdom of Muslim, the envoy of Husain p 171 ff.⁶⁵

The advisers of Husain were persistent in their endeavours to dissuade him from going to Kufah(A.D. 680) till he had ascertained to what extent the fickle inhabitants were willing to support him. " To this Husseyne at last assented, and Mosslem, the son of Aukkail, being the person chosen for the purpose, was directed to proceed immediately to Kufah, there to remain in private until he should have made himself sufficiently acquainted with the number and resources, and engaged the fidelity of the friends of his cause; of all which he was to transmit the necessary information, when, if it appeared advisable, Husseyne, at the proper period, would not fail to join him..... In the meantime Mosslem, the son of Aukkail, becoming apprised of what happened, endeavoured to secret himself under the protection of Hauny, the son of Orwauh, the most distinguished of Husseyne's adherents. While Obaidullah Zeiaud, having called together the principal inhabitants on the following day, told them, without reserve, that the design of his visit to Kufah was to extirpate, without exception, all who had acknowledged the authority of Husseyne, of their attachment to whom he desired it might be understood that he was well informed. Then, addressing himself particularly to Hauny, the son of Orwauh: 'I have heard,' said he, ' that Mosslem, the emissary of Husseyne, is at thy house.' And Hauny, denying the circumstance, was called upon by Obaidullah to swear it, which he had accordingly no sooner complied with, than his person was secured, while some of Obaidullah's attendants were despatched to his house. There they seized the unfortunate agent, and brought him immediately to the presence of their chief, by whom he was placed in

⁶⁵ Pelly , Sir Lewis *The Miracle Play of Hasan and Husain* London H. Allen 1879. Scene X pp171-172. Pelly has taken the plot of each play from Price's *Chronological Retrospect of Mahommedan History.* and Gibbon's *Decline and fall of the Roman Empire.*

safe custody, together with his protector. The palace being, however, soon after surrounded by a concourse of the inhabitants, to the number, as it is said, of fifty thousand men, in consequence of the detention of these two persons, Obaidullah, with his usual decision, took a very short course of suppressing the tumult; he caused both his prisoners to be conducted to the roof of the palace, where their heads were immediately struck off, and thrown among the multitude, which, thus scared like a flock of sheep, as immediately dispersed in every direction.

Murder of the Sons of Muslim p 190 ff.⁶⁶

After the death of Muslim, 'Ubaidullah, the Governor of Kufah, ever anxious to inflict injuries on any of the adherents of the unfortunate Husain, threw the sons of the murdered envoy into prison. The gaoler, however, taking pity upon them, allows them to escape, whereupon the son of Ziyad enjoins that diligent search shall be made for the missing youths, and promises to any one who may find them "good rewards for his trouble, namely, a horse, a dress of honour, a purse of gold, all by way of bounty and munificence." Captivated by the offer, a man steps forward and undertakes the task. While he is in search of the lads, his wife's maid, going to the Euphrates to fetch some water, accidentally meets with the sons of Muslim, wandering about homeless and desolate. She at once apprises her mistress, who thereupon gives them shelter in her house. Her husband, shortly returning, is surprised to find the object of his search concealed in his own house; whereupon, violating the sacred rites of hospitality, so inviolably respected in all Eastern countries, he basely murders the hapless lads; to secure the "prize of gold and silver" he hardened himself against" the darkness of the grave and the terrible punishment of the day of judgment," and added two more to the list of martyrs whose memory the Shi'ahs delight to reverence and honour.

The departure of Husain from Madinah on his way to Kufah p 207 ff.⁶⁷

Husain, the son of 'Ali', deeming himself in danger at Makkah, withdrew to Madinah; he steadily "refused to take oath of allegiance to Yazid. A messenger was sent to him from Kufah, entreating him to come to that city. The whole population, he was assured, were eager to espouse his cause, and pronounce the deposition of the Bani Ommaya. At first Hosain was distrustful of these advances, but such a number of

⁶⁶ Pelly op. cit., Scene XI p.190.

⁶⁷ Pelly op. cit., Scene XII p.207.

invitations kept pouring in, with long lists of the chief men of the city, all of whom had taken a solemn oath to die in his defence, that he ultimately resolved to make the venture. His friends vainly counselled him not to do so. They urged that if the people of Koufah were so bitter against Yazid as they affirmed themselves to be, they could revolt without him being actually in their midst. When Hosain turned a deaf ear to these solicitations, they entreated him at least to go alone. But here also they failed. Husain started (September A.D. 680) on his perilous expedition, accompanied by all his wives, his brothers, and his children, and escorted by forty horsemen and one hundred foot soldiers.

Withdrawal of Husain from the road to Kufah p 224 ff.⁶⁸

Hurrying on to the treacherous city of Kufah. Husain "with his little troop had arrived and encamped within three stages of Kadesiah. And a person of the name of Khur ben Yezzeid, secretly attached to the family of Ally, having been directed by Omar Saud to level the wells and places of refreshment in the desert, came rather unexpectedly on the encampment of the Imaum, whom, when he found that he was thus far on his way to Kufah, he earnestly entreated to return without delay, for that his agents had been put to death, and that Omar, the son of Saud, with four thousand men, was just at hand to intercept him. Alas! said Husain, 'encumbered with all this family, how can I return?' 'Up,' replied his friendly monitor, 'quit the road and retire to one side.' Husain accordingly decamped, and quitting the direct road, proceeded on one side to a place called Kerbela, where he again pitched his tents.

The Martyrdom of Hur P 236 ff.⁶⁹

The next who accosted him, though in very different terms, was Khur, or Khyr ben Yezzeid, of the tribe of Temeim, the chief by whom he was first apprized of the approach of his enemies, and by whose advice he withdrew from the high road. This person now respectfully saluting Husseyne by the name of 'Son of the Messenger of God,' announced that he was come to combat in his defence, and to sacrifice his life at his feet. 'Mayst thou taste the blessings of martyrdom.' said Husseyne, 'while I congratulate thee on the endless joys of Paradise, which will be thy reward, brave and generous as thou art, and as thy name imports,' alluding to the benevolent influence felt through nature

68 Pelly op. cit., Scene XIII. P.224.

69 Ibid., Scene XIV p.236.

from the presence of the sun, the latter being in Persian Khour and Khyr and Khurshaid.

Death of Ali Akbar p. 287ff.⁷⁰

On the plain of Karbala Husain's eldest son Ally Akbar, conceiving that as such he might aspire to the distinction of being the first of his family to lay down his life in defence of his parent, presented himself to the weapons of the enemy, and having announced aloud his name and descent, intrepidly rushed among them. In ten different assaults, in which, animated by the presence of his father, he forced himself into the thickest of the enemy, he sacrificed to his vengeance, at each assault, either two or three of those who stood opposed to him; but being at last almost suffocated with heat and thirst, he implored his father's pity, by complaining bitterly of sufferings which he was compelled to undergo. In this state, after assuring him that if he could relieve him at the price of his own existence, it would be a willing sacrifice, his father arose, and introducing his own tongue within the parched lips of his favourite child, thus endeavoured to alleviate his suffering by the only means of which his enemies had not yet been able to deprive him. The gallant youth then rushed for the last time into the conflict; and being wounded from behind by one of the enemy, whose name was Kerrah son of Saud, he fell, and was immediately surrounded and cut to pieces by these execrable betrayers of *the family of their Prophet*. This was a spectacle which entirely overwhelmed the feeling of Husseyne; for the first time in his life he gave utterance to a transport of grief, which he no longer attempted to suppress.

Volume Two:

Death of Kasim the bridegroom p .1 ff.⁷¹

This scene depicts the marriage (A.D 680) of Kasim the son of Hasan with Fatimah the daughter of Husain, and the subsequent death, on the same day, of the bridegroom fighting with the enemy on the plain of Karbala. "Kaussem the son of Mahommed, a child of ten years

70 Ibid ., Scene VII p.287.

71 Pelly op. cit., Scene XVIII p.1.

old, came out of the tents with a drawn sword in his hand; whom, on account of his tender years, Husseyne desiring to withdraw, the intrepid boy, with a resolution above his age, adjured his uncle, by the truth of the Prophet, to forebear to interrupt him; and being suffered to proceed, he was shortly afterwards assailed by one of the enemy's horsemen, who clove his head through the middle.

Death of Abbas the brother of Husain p. 18 ff.⁷²

The fortune of war had begun to turn against Husain in the field of Karbala. Not only had many of his trusted adherents been put to the sword, but his son 'Ali Akbar and his nephew Kasim had fallen beneath the overwhelming numbers of the enemy. "Dye thou thy hand and sword with the enemy's blood, and fight back to back with thy brother against them," was the command of the *undaunted Imam to his brother* and standard-bearer, the warrior 'Abbas. Readily obeying the injunction, after adieu to his family, he accompanied his brother to the front, and at once wrought sad havoc amongst the ranks of the enemy. At length, however, he fell mortally wounded, and hearing from the lips of Husain that the latter was gratified with the prowess displayed by his standard-bearer, the brave soldier died happy a martyr-according to the Shi'ah tradition -in the cause of the true faith.

Martyrdom of Husain p. 81 ff.⁷³

Husain was slain on the field of Karbala on 9th October, A.D. 680. "On the morning of the fatal day he mounted on horseback, with his sword in one hand and the Koran in the other; his generous band of martyrs consisted only of thirty-two horse and forty foot, but their flanks and rear were secured by the tent ropes, and by a deep trench which they had filled with lighted faggots, according to the practice of the Arabs. The enemy advanced with reluctance; and one of their chief deserted, with thirty followers, to claim the partnership of inevitable death. In every close onset or single combat the despair of the Fatimites was invincible; but the surrounding multitudes galled them from a distance with a cloud of arrows, and the horses and men were successively slain. A truce was allowed on both sides for the hour of prayer; and the battle at length expired by the death of the last of the companions of Hosein. Alone, weary, and wounded, he seated himself at the door of his tent. As he tasted a drop of water, he was pierced in the mouth with a dart; and his son and nephew, two beautiful youths, were killed in his arms. He lifted his hands to heaven - they were full

⁷² Ibid ., p.18.

⁷³ Ibid., Scene XXIII p.81.

of blood- and he uttered a funeral prayer for the living and the dead. In a transport of despair his sister issued from the tent, and adjured the general of the Cufians that he would not suffer Hosein to be murdered before his eyes; a tear tricked down his venerable beard, and the boldest of his soldiers fell back on every side as the dying hero threw himself among them. The remorseless Shamer - a name detested by the faithful- reproached their cowardice; and the grandson of Mahomet was slain with three and thirty strokes of lances and swords. After they had trampled on his body, they carried his head to the castle of Cufa and the inhuman Obeidollah struck him on the mouth with a cane. 'Alas!' exclaimed an aged Musulman, 'on these lips have I seen the lips of the Apostle of God!' In a distant age and climate the tragic scene of the death of Hosein will awaken the sympathy of the coldest reader

The camp at Karbala after the death of Husain p.104 ff.⁷⁴

After the death of Husain his family wandered about the camp distracted and bewildered. Perplexed and scarce knowing what to do, they at first commence to complain of the cruel fate which had overtaken them; but in the midst of their troubles they began to realise that the enemy still surround them, and they accordingly keep watch over the camp lest a sudden surprise should bring upon them that destruction which had overtaken their chief. To add to their distress Rukkayah, a daughter of Husain, is missing from their number, and the family lament her loss in loud and bitter tones of lamentation, which so affected the soul of the departed, Ali that his spirit returns to earth and points out to the sorrowing women where the lost damsel can be found. "O thirsty ones," says one of the unhappy family, "Husain's child is lying down in the field of battle; the planet that had been lost sight of is discovered in the vicinity of the moon." Thus far well; but the Scene closes, leaving the women of Husain's camp alarmed and sore distressed, anticipating at any moment an irruption of the enemy, and consequent captivity and shame.

Despatch of Husain's family as captives to Syria p. 188 ff.⁷⁵

After the family of Husain had been conducted to Kufah by 'Umar Sa'd they were led to the governor, who did not spare their feelings in any way, and "whose brutality to these defenceless captives was further exemplified in the orders which he issued, that the women in a state of entire nakedness should be immediately conducted to

⁷⁴ Pelly op. cit., sceneXXIV p.104.

⁷⁵ Ibid., Scene XXIX p.188.

Damascus. The head of Husseyne also, after it had been sufficiently exposed through all the streets of Kufah, was transmitted to the same place in charge of Raujes the son of Keyss, selected for his singular eloquence to announce to Yezzeid on this occasion the decisive triumph of his cause.

Arrival of Husain's family at Damascus p 202 ff.⁷⁶

On the arrival at Damascus of the family of Husain, accompanied by the mutilated head of their martyred lord, the cruel and blood - thirsty Yazid "could not be withheld from bestowing, like his representative at Kufah, on the head of his unfortunate rival the same brutal indignity by beating it on the lips and teeth with his whip.... Turning to the younger Ally, who was present with the other captives, he proceeded in a train of insult to reproach him with the judgments which seemed to peruse the destinies of his family, and receiving from him a reply equally modest and applicable...he continued to rail at his unhappy prisoner, until after sufficiently indulging his malevolent spirit, he turned to exhaust his spleen upon the noble-minded Zeynab, whose sorrows he might propose to aggravate when, in addressing her by the appellation of daughter of the Prophet's son-in-law, he brought to her recollection the exalted stock from which she sprung.

While Sadegh Homayoni set down the order of the performances of Taziyeh during the course of the first ten or thirteen days of Muharram he points out that this listing is not incontrovertible except for the Majlis of the tenth day. However, he introduces thirteen Majlises as follows:⁷⁷

The first day : *The death of Ebrahim.*

The second day: *The Majlis of Fatemah or The Majlis of Zainab.*

The third day: *The Majlis of Moslem.*

The forth day: *The Majlis of Moslem's children.*

⁷⁶ Ibid., Scene XXX p.202.

⁷⁷ Homayouni, Sadegh Taziyeh in Iran Navid Press Shiraz, Iran, 1989., pp.368-369.

The fifth day: *The farewell to Meddineh.*

The sixth day: *The Taziyeh of Hur.*

The seventh day: *The Majlis of Abbas.*

The eighth day: *The children of Zainab.*

The ninth day: *The martyrdom of Ali Akbar.*

The tenth day: *The martyrdom Of Imam Hussein.*

The eleventh day: *The arrival of Hussein's family at Damascus.*

The twelfth day: *The arrival at Kufa.*

The thirteenth day: *The repentance of Yazid and the Majlis of the vengeance of Mokhtar.*

We read in the daily Abrar, dated second of Tir, 1373 Solar Hijri (23th. Jun. 1994/ 1415 Lunar Hijri) No: 1630 that the department of the public relation of the fourth district of municipality of Tehran has announced: " On the occasion of Muharram of the year of 1415 Lunar Hijri seven nights of performances of Taziyeh have been prepared for public. They will be performed by the corner of Martyr Iraqi Ave in the Ressalat highway. The opening night will be Thursday the ninth of Tir, the fourth month of Persian calendar, 1373 (30th of June 1994. 20th of Muharram 1415). This department has introduced the Majlises as follows:

Friday third of Tir (14th of Muharram-24th of June) *The Majlis of Moslem.*

Saturday fourth of Tir (15th of Muharram-25th of June) *The Majlis of the Martyrdom of Moslem's Sons.*

Sunday fifth of Tir (16th of Muharram- 26th of June) *The Majlis Hurr.*

Monday sixth of Tir (17th of Muharram-27th of June) *The Majlis of the Martyrdom of Ali Akbar.*

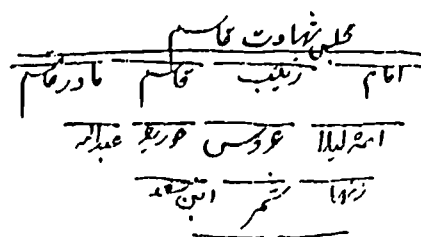
Tuesday seventh of Tir (18th of Muharram-28th of June) *The Majlis of Kassem.*

Wednesday eight of Tir (19th of Muharram-29th of June) *The Majlis of the Martyrdom of Abbas.*

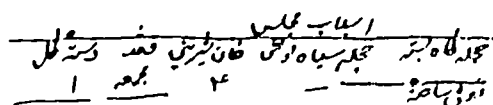
Thursday ninth of Tir (20th of Muharram-30th of June) *The Majlis of the Martyrdom of Imam Hussein.*

As we see the order of the performances , more or less, is similar to that which Pelly and Homayoni have suggested. However, the program shows us these Majlises have begun on the 14th of Muharram . Based upon strong surmise the group or groups of these performances have probably been busy during the course of the first ten days of Muharram in an other district of Tehran or even in other cities. Overall as we see the order of the events of Karbela have been considered carefully.

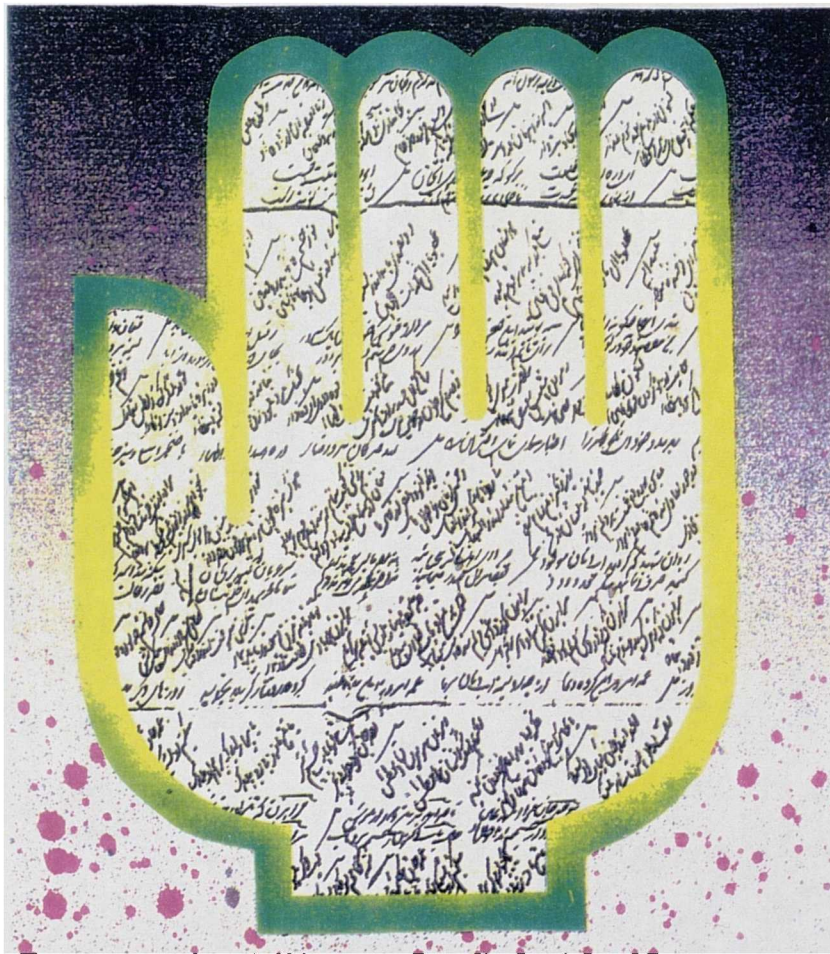
The principle majlises number slightly more than hundred and are set down in the fourth chapter of Sadegh Homayouni's book with the title of Taziyeh in Iran.



The lists of characters and Props of Majlis of Kassem



CHAPTER TWO



The Symbol of the Hand of Abbas or the Five members of the Family of The Prophet Mohammed (Mohammed, Ali, Fatemeh, Hassam, Hussein.) [Peace be upon them] From the book of Religious Dramatic Literature ed. Anassori, Jaber Designed by Farhad Narestani

Chapter two

The History of Imam Hussein and the Ceremonies Commemorating his Martyrdom.

a; A brief history of the life of Imam Hussein and his martyrdom.

On the third of *Sha,bân* (the eight month of Lunar Hijri year) of the fourth of Hijri (A.D. 625) year, in the family of the Prophet Mohammed, a son was born whose birth has echoed down the centuries. He was the son of Ali-The ideal of virtue, piety, bravery and honesty- and Fatimah the daughter of the prophet who was the manifestation of chastity and modesty.

Mohammed had no son of his own, so the sons of Ali and Fatimah- Hassan and Hussein- were as dear to him as his own. It is said that the prophet named the new born son Hussein. He took the beloved sons under his direct education and taught them the secret of his prophetic mission. Since the death of Mohammed(A.D. 632) everything in this family was dictated by either religious or political considerations.

Ali the father of the Hassnian(Hassan and Hussein) and the son-in-law of the prophet was engaged in conflict which affected his sons, particularly the seven years old Hussein. He was the witness when his father protected the people against blood shed and riot by standing aloof from the succession of the prophet and when he only accepted the Caliphate after three others had held it. Nonetheless , considering this agreement, Ali did not have a tranquil life,

specially when he accepted the Caliphate, - in the Shiite term he became the first Imam¹. The Hassanian shared their father's struggles and sufferings, in both the spiritual and physical sense, when Ali was forced to agree to war against *Moawiah*, the governor of Syria².

1 Ali was one of Mahomet's best and most successful captains. He married Fatima, the daughter of the prophet; his sons, Hassan and Hussien, were as children, favourites with Mahomet, who had no son of his own to succeed him, and was expected to name Ali as his successor. He named no successor. At his death (the year 632 of our era) Ali was passed over, and the first caliph, or vicar and lieutenant of Mahomet in the government of the state, was Abu-Beker; only the spiritual inheritance of Mahomet, the dignity of Imam, or Primate, devolved by right on Ali and his children. Ali, lion of God as in war he was, held aloof from politics and political intrigue, loved retirement and prayer, was the most pious and disinterested of men. At Abu-Bekr's death he was again passed over in favour of Omar. Omar was succeeded by Othman, and still Ali remained tranquil. Othman was assassinated, and then Ali, chiefly to prevent disturbance and bloodshed, accepted (A.D 655) the caliphate. Meanwhile, the Mahometan armies had conquered Persia, Syria, and Egypt; the Governor of Syria, Moawiyah, an able and ambitious man, set himself up as caliph, his title was recognised by Amrou, the Governor of Egypt, and a bloody and indecisive battle was fought in Mesopotamia between Ali's army and Moawiyah's. Gibbon shall tell the rest: " In the temple of Mecca three Charegites or enthusiasts discoursed of the disorders of the church and state; they soon agreed that the deaths of Ali, of Moawiyah, and of his friend Amrou, the Viceroy of Egypt, would restore the peace and unity of religion. Each of the assassins chose his victim, poisoned his dagger, devoted his life, and secretly repaired to the scene of action. Their resolution was equally desperate; but the first mistook the person of Amrou, and stabbed the deputy who occupied his seat; the prince of Damascus was dangerously hurt by the second; Ali, the lawful caliph, in the mosque of Kufa, received a mortal wound from the hand of the third." Arnold, Mathew, Essays in Criticism (London: Macmillan and Co., 1932) pp.228-229. See also :An Introduction to Shii Islam by Moojan Momen, Yale University Press New Haven and London, 1985, Parts two and three pp.11-26.

2 When Ali(A.S) became Caliph his first act was to recall Moawiyah from Syria. Moawiyah refused to obey. Sir L. Pelly's in his translation writes:" The contest was renewed at Siffen, on which occasion, notwithstanding that the Syrian army was led by Moawiyah in person, Ali had almost won, when a device of Amrou, the conqueror of Egypt, suddenly paralysed the onset of the Caliph's army in the very moment of victory. That arch intriguer ordered his soldiers to raise copies of the Coran on their spears, and to shout as they advanced, "Let the blood of the Faithful cease to flow; if the Syrian army be destroyed who will defend the frontier against the Greeks? If the army of Irak be destroyed who will defend it against Persians and Turks? Let the word of God decide between us!" "God is great," shouted back the army of Ali", we must all submit to the arbitrament of the book." Pelly op. cit., vol one, p. IX.

What occurred culminated in the assassination of Ali which proved that the seeds of a kind of enmity, with their family, had been sown. The murder of Ali was the first step in a campaign to prevent the prophet's family from entering into their religious inheritance even when the wishes of Mohammed in this direction were known. Hereupon the Hassanian considered what the situation required. Their feelings of duty were strong and weighed upon them, after the assassination of Ali. On the other side their enemies, in particular Moawiyah, continued war against this family and sought to deny their right. Moawiyah knew well that people respected the prophet's family and knew that the leadership for this family was rightfully established. When Hassan was announced as the successor of his father, people accepted him and took the oath of allegiance to him. Hassan acknowledged his responsibility and invited Moawiyah to swear allegiance to him. But Moawiyah returned Hassan's invitation and in return invited Hassan to come to his governorship. Hassan was aware that people of *Kufa* were unstable, owing to their fear of Moawiyah and because of their allegiance may not be trustworthy. He preferred instead of conflict to sign a peace agreement in which he renounced the right of succession until after the death of Moawiyah.

Moawiyah who was the deadliest enemy from the outset of Ali's Caliphate, while he was successfully spending his sovereignty upon Kufa and other Islamic lands, sought secretly to make his Caliphate hereditary, merely in order to retain the family of *Ommiades* in power. The signing of the treaty between Hassan and him created an opportunity to remove one of the main clauses of the contract, the succession of Hassan. Moawiyah felt no shame in political intrigue even to the point of instigating Hassan's wife to poison her husband A.H. 49(A.D.668) or creating among the people agitation for the succession of his son Yazid.

Moawiyah determined, so long as he lived he would work for public consent for the selection of Yazid as his successor. He had recognised that it would not be easy to announce the unworthy Yazid as the ruler of Islamic lands, as long as Hussein was among his people. Nonetheless he persisted in his efforts so that ,in the end, he ventured to establish Yazid as the Caliph.

When Moawiyah died A.H.60 (A.D.679) he left a last will reflecting on Ali and his sons; " apart from the allegiance of people I was not able to gain the support of the family of Ali. Beware of what you are doing to Hussein who is the severest among them. Be cautious about him." Moawiyah wrote.

Yazid was a son of a villager wife of Moawiyah who did not like to live in a palace. Therefore she was sent to her birth-place accompanied by Yazid, her son. There Yazid learned nomadic education, though his mother was endowed with learning. Apart from hunting and training animals, Yazid was a profligate pleasure-seeker , disrespectful to religious law, and he excessively spent most of his time in drinking wine and gambling. He was removed far from the matters of state³. As a result of this kind of experience of life Yazid was inexperienced in political or religious matters. Yet Imam Hussein, since the martyrdom of his brother, loyally persisted for ten years to maintain the treaty until the end of Moawiyah's life, though in the course of his semi-retirement he was several times invited by the people of Kufa to be the successor of Moawiyah and to remove Yazid from the Caliphate of Islamic lands.

3 When Al- Walid-b-Yazid became caliph he was devoted to singing drinking and hunting. Singers were brought to him from Medina and other places. He sent for Ash'ab, who was brought to him, and he clothed him with trousers of monkey skin with a tail and told him: "Dance and sing a poem that will please me. If you do, I will give one thousand dirhams." Ash'ab sang, and Al-Walid was pleased and gave him one thousand dirham. Moreh Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature in The Medieval Arabic World Edinburgh University Press, 1991., p.45.

Let us look at Yazid when he became Caliph and his relations with Hussein. The first step was his sending a letter to the governor of *Medina* asking him to proclaim his Caliphate in the presence of Hussein, and stressing the taking of the oath of allegiance to Yazid on pain of death.

The governor of *Medina* invited Hussein to receive the message of Yazid. Hussein reacted against this demand and he decided to leave the place, saying: "I reject the private taking of the oath of allegiance to Yazid. This act of loyalty should be performed in public." One of the Governor's secretaries suggested capturing Hussein but this proposition was rejected, owing to the loyalty of the governor to Hussein and his family. Then to Yazid the governor wrote thus: "You well know who is Hussein and you are aware he has refused to take an oath of allegiance to you. The decision is yours". This response caused him to be removed from his post as governor of Medina.

Henceforth Hussein was deeply agitated and his tranquil life was disturbed. For Hussein it was incontrovertible that Yazid should persist in keeping his power. So he had to either take an oath of allegiance, which meant accepting offences to his family, or to accept the consequences. On second thought Hussein decided to quit Medina, moving towards Iraq, preserving the sacred city of Medina by preventing the shedding of blood.

On the night of twenty eight of the month of *Rajab* (seventh month of the Lunar year) A.H.60 Hussein left *Medina* accompanied by a small group of his sincere followers and household. After five days walking, on the third of *Shaeban*, they arrived in Mecca. There people pleaded with him to fight for his rights. On the other hand when a number of people in Kufa learned that Hussein had departed from Medina for *Mecca* they consulted each other and became bent on inviting him to take the Caliphate. This letter of invitation was received by Hussein on the Tenth of *Ramadan* (ninth month of Lunar year)

A.H.60 in *Mecca*. Following this several letters of humble requests, from reliable persons, were sent to him. " Should you accept our request we all attest that we will be your devoted servants." It is said that the number of letters were about twelve thousand.

According to *Tabari's* version⁴, the citizen of Kufa promised that more than one hundred thousand' people were ready to be sacrificed for Imam Hussein.

Hussein who had experienced the infidelity of the people of Kufa, in the course of his father and brother's ruling, did not decide to proceed there without caution. His cousin *Moslem* made himself ready to go there to investigate the circumstances of the city and report what he may learn, to Hussein. Imam Hussein gave Moslem a letter underlying the response of the people of Kufa and despatched him to the destination.

The egress of Moslem occurred in the second half of the Ramadan of A.H.60 and his arrival in Kufa was after nineteen days walking on the fifth of *Shaval*(Tenth month of Lunar year) of same year. He straight went to *Mokhtar*(Muchtâr) who was one of dignitaries in the city. Mokhtar welcomed him and placed Moslem in his house. When the people of Kufa were informed that the representative of Imam Hussein has arrived in the city they gathered round him and proclaimed their allegiance to him and Hussein. Every day the number of supporters increased. To quote the history of Tabari, on the first day gathered people who numbered eighteen thousand. Moslem forthwith sent a letter for Hussein and asked him to depart from Mecca to Kufa as soon as he could. On the other side, patrons of Yazid, who found the Caliphate of Yazid in danger, sought to send him all information of recent occurrences. Since the

4 One of the reliable sources among Suni and Shiite Moslems

gulf between Kufa to the palace of Yazid was less than the distance of Kufa to Mecca, therefore, Yazid received his letter sooner than that which had been sent to Hussein.

Yazid who became aware of the danger instantaneously promoted *Ibn-ziad* to the governorship of Kufa as well as his office as the ruler of *Bassra*, intending to put an end to the growing influence of Moslem upon Kufa and other cities.

Ibn-Ziad who was proud of his election for this commissary set out to Kufa in order to teach a lesson to the adherents of Imam Hussein. In the eventide he arrived in Kufa in the disguise of one of the family of the prophet. People of the city who expected the arrival of Hussein conceived that this was Hussein and welcomed him. Ibn-ziad without replying, rapidly proceeded to the palace of the ruler, while he noticed that a large crowd, were walking behind him. He was unaware that his inattention to the masses created doubts about his identity. Next day a crowd collected together in a mosque and Ibn-Ziad proclaimed his governorship of Kufa. He made it clear that he would annihilate those who rose in opposition of his policy. In order to show his domination over the city he ordered to be captured and executed a great number of nobles and high ranked people who had taken the oath of allegiance to *Moslem* and supported him.

Hereafter for Moslem everything went wrong so that he sought to leave Mokhtar's abode and dwelt in *Hani-e Ibn-e Orva*'s house. Then he necessarily arranged to visit his adherents in secret.

Ibn-Ziad who comprehended that Moslem was not able to fulfill his plan was bent on finding and capturing him. But first *Hani* who had sheltered Moslem was imprisoned. In consequence Moslem had to escape. Between the disappearance of Moslem and his capture Ibn-Ziad rebuked, terrified and

threatened people with death, should they support Moslem. In the end cowardly people put their allegiance aside and left Moslem all alone, wandering in Kufa. Ultimately an old woman took a risk and hid Moslem in her house. She was unaware of the fact that her son conceived that he would be entitled to receive a big award if he showed the hiding place of Moslem. So Moslem was trapped and captured. Ibn-Ziad forthwith ordered his men to take Moslem on the flat roof of his palace and behead him. His command was quickly obeyed. Then the body of Moslem was thrown out to the masses who were watching the scene.

This event was the first victory for Yazid though he was still frightened of Hussein. It is said the day of Moslem's death was coincident with the day of the departure of Imam Hussein from Mecca to Kufa, namely the eighth of Zeal *Hajeh*(eleventh month) A.H.60. There is a strong surmise that Moslem had sent a letter explaining his fate but this was received too late. In any case Hussein had to leave *Mecca*, not merely because of his invitation to Kufa but because he had learned that Yazid had appointed commissioners to murder him in the course of the rites of the pilgrimage of the Haj. Whereupon for the same reason out of respect for Medina, namely avoiding of blood shed in this city, he left Mecca and the ceremony of Haj unfinished and went toward Kufa, accompanied by his household and a number of adherents⁵. Though Hussein was urged to delay his departure, or at least to leave his wife and children behind him, Hussein had prepared himself for any conclusion because he believed that Islamic law would collapse if Yazid remained in power.

5 When a large number of people were coming from different cities to Mecca, he gave a speech and informed the people that he was not going to perform the Haj that year in order to fulfil his duty and go to Kufa. Thasis Gustan "Religious Symbolism and Social Change: The Drama of Hussein" Scholars, Saints and Sufis ed Nikki R. Keddie University of California Los Angeles, 1972., p351.

Yazid who learned Hussein was on the way to Kufa resolved to close all access to Kufa and surround him by blocking his group on the way and by holding his arrival back.

Hussein on his way encountered the convoy of the enemy led by Hurr in the Gadesiyeh⁶. In this confrontation Hussein was informed of the intention of the enemy to capture him and to present him at the court of Yazid. He addressed his enemies and delivered to them a sententious speech.

Hussein's speech worked to the advantage of embarrassing his foes, who refrained from capturing Hussein and considered it sufficient merely to guard him in the dry desert. Hussein regardless of what was dictated to him changed his direction and set out toward Karbela. When he arrived in this land he said to his company: " This is the land of our doom." That day was second day of Muharram(the first month of Lunar year)A.H. 61/ A.D.680.

In Kufa, Ibn-ziad used his influence upon the people and instigated them to oppose Hussein so that he successfully mobilized them to go to war against Hussein. He also summoned up *Amr-Ibn-sâd* , who was suppressing the tribe of Dialeme, who had revolted against Yazid, to strengthen his army. In the meantime the command of the army was given to him. Ibn-sâd realised in this conflict he was going to slaughter Hussein the son of Ali, the dearest one in the family of the Prophet, but since he had a desperate dream of being the ruler of Ray and was looking forward to this opportunity and feared of losing this, he accepted war against this great family. In the first stage he wished to gain Hussein's consent without resorting to conflict. He sent his representative to ask Hussein for what purpose he had sought to come to Kufa and to discover his

6 Gadesiyeh was a frontier city between Iraq and Iran. Owing to Iranian attachment to the family of the prophet this city was intensively guarded. Company, Fazlalah Hussien kist Foroughi Press, Tehran, 1966. p.77.

attitude regarding his allegiance to Yazid. In response Ibn-Sâd, repeatedly, was told: "Seeing that the citizens of Kufa asked me to come I am here. It matters little where , either in the battle-field or in the city. But if they have changed their decision I am free to go to wherever I wish."

Ibn-Sâd reported this response to Ibn-Ziad, hoping to obtain his agreement to let Hussein leave Kufa, but Ibn-Ziad enforced Ibn-Sâd to make no concessions but to force Hussein to give consent to sworn allegiance to Yazid. If Hussein did not accept they would drive him to extremities by closing the access to the Euphrates. Ibn-Ziad besides his demand sent Shemr to the plain of Karbela⁷ as a guardian of the Ibn-Sâd's army. When Ibn-Sâd met Shemr he felt his reputation was in danger and accordingly decided to fulfill what had been planned.

On the ninth of Muharram a thousand body of cavalry at the side of Ibn-Sâd prepared for the next day to attack against the small group of defenders of the right.

During the short respite of a night the Imam prepared, with calm and solemn resignation, to encounter his fate. "He pressed his friends to consult their safety by a timely flight; they unanimously refused to desert or survive their beloved master, and their courage was fortified by a fervent prayer and the assurance of paradise.." ⁸

In the night of Ashura in the camp of Hussein there was resignation in the face of death and fervency of faith , which culminated in a miracle. The

⁷ In Arabic Karbela means Sorrow and calamity. It is said when Imam Hussein reached the zone of Karbela asked the name of the area.

"Karbela". He was told.

Then Imam Hussein said: " O my Lord. From Karbela I take protection."

Shahidi, Ja'far New Research on the Rising of Imam Hussein (after fifty years) Tehran Islamic Culture Press, 1979., p.160.

⁸ Arnold op. cit., p. 232.

camp was circumnambulated by angels and became wholly dedicated to virtue, excellency and liberality. Accordingly Hussein's disciples were delighted at this manifestation of the campaign of faith removed from blasphemy.

The day of Ashura arrived. Ibn-Sâd lunged at Hussein and threatened that if the conditions were not accepted - of conducting him safely to the presence of Yazid and the giving of his loyalty - he would start fighting.

" On no occasion." Hussein replied.

It is said Hussein put on the prophet 's turban and cloak and took his sword in hand and riding his horse stood before the enemy and addressed to them said:

" O thou deceived people look at me

Who am I The Son of Ali ; The son of Fatemeh The Daughter of the Prophet

Look at me and say what I have done to you?!

Have I injured any of you?

Do I threaten your prosperity?

And now I am telling you; is this your generosity

To intercept the river denying the woman and children,

Whom you have invited ?

We are all ready to accept the consequence of this wild

And ungenerous behaviour.

Be wise and look at your fate."⁹

⁹ Company, F Hussein Kist (Who is Hussein) Tehran ,Foroughin press, 1966., p.98.

The response to Hussein was the arrows which were shot at him.

Hurr, who discerned the fire of war was bursting into flame and would put the life of Hussein in danger felt guilty, appealed to Ibn-Sâd to desist shooting and let Hussein leave the scene of fighting. Ibn-Sâd refused and pointed out that he was going to put an end to this story and obliterate any revolt against Yazid. Repentant Hurr, to prevent himself from committing any further treacherous action, converted to Hussein and joined his defenders until martyred.

Hussein and his companions courageously resisted against this huge army. Yet it was incontrovertible that the limited number of the defenders of the truth were not able to tolerate the torment of thirst, which was the cause of the dying of the women and children in the camp on the one side, and on the other hand forced them to answer the strong cruel attack of the adversary. As result of that, they were successively slain. Among them were eighteen descendants of Ali and Fatimah such as his ~~Brother~~ *Abolfazl* whose hands were cut off when he was bearing water to the camp; *Ali Akbar*, Standard bearer, a son of Hussein and *Ali Asghar* who was only six month old. The enemy shot him when Hussein was trying to wet his lips by giving him some water. *Kassem* fourteen years old, the son of Hassan, was also slain with others.

Ultimately when all resistance on the side of Hussein collapsed Shemr lunged at Hussein, who was still singly fighting, threw him down off his horse and stood beside him, cutting off Hussein's head. Then he took the head to Yazid's court.

The day of *Ashura* was ended thus. Next day the women and children in chains were taken to the court of Yazid at *Damascus*. There *Zianab*, the

courageous sister of Hussein , made an emotional and touching speech revealing all the crimes committed by the family of Yazid.

"Later, Al Muchtâr, called the avenger, entered on a mission of extermination against all who were concerned in the slaughter of Hussein. The story of his persistent efforts and marvelous exploits merits a separate narrative; but it suffice to state here that in the accomplishment of his tremendous task *Al Muchtâr* succeeded so thoroughly, that besides slaying all the leaders in that great tragedy, and an immense multitude in numerous battles, he slaughtered nearly three score thousand in cold blood before he himself fell under the stroke of the grim destroyer of all."¹⁰

It should be pointed out that later, the head of Hussein was buried with his body at Karbela in Iraq, now one of the great sanctuaries of the Shi'ite.

Yazid's reign lasted for about four years. In the first year he slew Hussein, in the second year he sacked Medina and in the third year he attacked Mecca. These three outrages in particular sent a shudder of horror throughout the Moslem world¹¹.

A.S, Tritton writes:

"To-day they will tell you' We hate Yazid, the caliph who instigated these catastrophes.' Husain has become a martyr whom some put beside Jesus, and the tale of his suffering fires enthusiasm for the unlucky family and inflames hatred for their oppressors."¹²

10 Benjamin, S Persia and the Persian Jouhn Hurray, London, 1887., pp.370-371.

11 On the tragedy of Karbela see also: Muir, W, The Caliphate (Beirut: Khayats., 1963) pp.321-328.

12 Tritton,A.S Islam, Belief and practices (New York: Hutchinson's University Library., 1951) pp.72-76.

The massacred of Karbela has been realized by certain people in the Sunni world as "unjust and irresponsible actions carried out at this time."¹³

Salman Ghaffari based on the Old Testament remarks:

"This is the sacrifice which had been prophesied in the Old Testament, in which God promises to avenge the blood of the holy Imam Hussein."¹⁴

Ghaffari brings a segment of the book of the prophet *Jeremiah*.

"For this is a day of Lord
God of Hosts, a day of Vengeance,
that he may avenge *him of his adversaries*
and the sword shall devour and it
shall satiate and make drunk with their
blood for the Lord God of Hosts
hath a Sacrifice in the north
county by the river Euphrates."

b; Mourning Ceremonies for the Imam Hussein:

Following the imposition of Arab rule over Iran, in the end of the Sassanid dynasty, the Iranians manifested strong opposition to this. The formation of the liberation movements and the Persian sect(Shi'ite Moslem)¹⁵, which opposed the

13 See also Shiite Islam Allameh Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabatabai Translated by Sayyid Husyn Nasar, Houston, U.S.A 1979. p.58.

14 Ghaffari, Salman Shia'ism Haidari press Tehran Iran , nd., p.119.
See also The English Bible Oxford University Press, 1970, p.973.

15 The Iranian Shi'a belong to the group known as the *Ithna ashariyya*, or the twelvers, since they recognize twelve Imams, the last of whom, al-Mahdi, the awaited messianic figure, is believed to be alive and in a state of occultation(the ghybat-i Kubra) and will return to usher in the ideal state. In his absence, the "pupils of Imam" are to guide the people. Even though at a high level of generalization it might be correct to say that the

central government of Ommid¹⁶ and even Abbasid¹⁷, were the result of these efforts. The spur for the opposition movement was the usurpation of the Caliphate by *Ommid*(Umayyad) who was not numbered among the family of the prophet Mohammed.

Beizai writing on the circumstances of the close relations between the Iranians and the family of the prophet has taken into consideration four reasons.

He remarks:

"a;. Perhaps, the relation between *Salman Farsi*, who was a wise governor of some cities and an intimate Iranian friend of the prophet.¹⁸

Twelver Shi'a have been content with being observers of the political scene rather than the originators of political movements. Thasis Gustav (Article No:14) Scholars, Saints and Sufis -Muslim Religious Institutions Since 1500. ed; Nikki R. Keddie University of California , Los Angeles 1972. p.350 and p.358.

Nasr adds: Shi'a people have been involved in the course of centuries in this kind of movement which means rising against tyranny(Zolm) and oppression(Setam) S.H Nasr Ideal and Realities of Islam London 1966 .p.167.

John L. Esposito writes: "Shiism has been the state religion of Iran since the sixteenth century. At critical points, Shii belief, leadership, and institutions have played an important role in Iranian politics. However, Shii Islam itself has been embroiled in politics since its inception." Although this is not the entire case, between the sects of Islam today. He adds:" Shii history and belief are the underpinning of modern Iran's revolutionary ideology. Throughout Islamic history, the Shii have been a minority, often disenfranchised and oppressed, within the Sunni- dominated Muslem world.

Esposito, John. L The Iranian Revolution. Its Global Impact Florida International University Press Mimi 1990., p.18.

¹⁶ The whole period of the rule of the Ommid (Umayyads) was filled with disturbances and rebellions, and according to the Abu Muslem- Nameh, seventy one leaders rebelled in turn against Umayyas before the seventy second, the Khurasani leader Abu Muslem, was finally victorious against them. Eqbal Zahra " Elegy in the Qajar Period" (Article No:15) Taziye/ Ritual and Drama in Iran ed Chelkowski. p.195.

¹⁷ Second- eighth centuries . See also Shiit Islam Allamah Syaid Muhammad Husyn Tabatabai Translated by S. H. Nasr Houston ,U.S.A 1979, p.60.

It is said"whenever one of the Imams of salvation or an important member of the Prophet's Family dies, the Abbasids do not attend his funeral. But whenever one of their jesters, players, or fools dies, the judges and rulers attend his funeral and the commanders of the army and the governors 'make themselves ready to mourn him in the mosque". Baktash op. cit., p.98.

b; According to the tradition the prophet remembered *Anoshirvan*(Anushirwan) the Sassanid king respectfully.

c; It is said Ali ,peace be upon him, opposed the selling of the captured daughters of *Yazdgerd* the third, the last Sassanian king, into slavery and married them to the high ranking Arabs respectfully.

d; The most important among these is the marriage of Imam Hussein to *Shahrbanu* one of the *Yazdgerd's* daughters. *Shahrbanu* was the mother of the fourth Imam¹⁹ of the Shiite. Therefore all the following Imam are her off-spring. Amongst them is the eighth Imam whose shrine is in *Mash-had* one of the biggest cities in Iran.

The promotion of religious identity, through the Shi'ite sect, could also be said to mask political expediency²⁰. The Safavids dynasty(1499-1722A.D./A.H.905-1135), by establishing Shi'ite Islam as the state religion, established themselves as the strongest dynasty since the Sassanids and this later enabled them to protect their power against the aggression of the Sunnite *Ottomans*. During their rule Iran rose to be a great political power , once again.²¹

Ibn al Athir tells us that the entertainer 'Abbada Al- Mukhannath' used to impersonate Ali at the court of Abbasid Caliph al Mutawakkil(d.246/861): Al Mutawakkil was full of hatred of Ali ibn Abi Talib, upon him be peace, and his family... Moreh Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature in The Medieval Arabic World p.89.

18 The Prophet said: "God has informed me that he loves four men and that I should love them also." They asked about their names. He mentioned Ali and then the name of Abu Dharr, Salman and Miqdad. Taba Tabai op. cit., p.45.

19 Zan-Ul Abid-Din, the fourth Imam of Shi'ahs. He was badly ill during the course of the fighting at Karbela, when his father, Hussein was slain, he was sent to Damascus together with his aunt Zainab.

20 Among the political affairs which the leaders of the Shi'a sect covered with the cloak of religion and which greatly attracted the minds of their own followers as well as non-Shi'as is the copying of the principles of the theatre called *Shabih* and *Taziyeh* in memory of Hussein. Baktash op. cit., p.119.

21 See also Shi'ism during the 8th to 20th century Tabatabai op. cit., pp.61-67.

The *Safavids* beside their religious policies supported music, architecture and processional activities, intent on the promotion of customs. Gradually after a period of comparative tranquillity in the state, rich citizens, deriving their wealth from the increase of trade, for reasons which may have derived from religious piety or from a desire for ostentatious show, began to sponsor these religious processions, which consequently increased in number and scale with each year. Because of this *Isfahan*, the capital of Safavids, became renowned for its spectacular processions and spectators were able to stand and observe the passing of tableaux re-enacting the events at Karbela, from morning to eventide. Ehsan Yarshater writes:

"Drama was not a channel of literary expression in Pre-modern Iran, and therefore it is all the more intriguing that a unique case of religious drama in verse should have developed during or after the Safavid period with no apparent ancestry or progeny"²².

However, for the purpose of this discussion, let us revert to Iranian history, in order to follow the process of the religio-historical drama from the middle of the Islamic period.

It was mentioned that the Sassanid dynasty was overcome by the Arabs. Then a long period elapsed before Iran succeeded in evolving a sequence of independent and semi-independent governments. One of the governments constituted in the 4th century Lunar Hijri (933 to 986 A.D. was the dynasty of *Ale-Buwayh*(Ale-Buyid)²³, which was able to rule over major parts of Iran and

²² Quoted Yarshater, Ehsan "Taziye and pre-Islamic Mourning Rites in Iran" (Article No:7) *Taziye/ Ritual and Drama in Iran* ed Chelkowski, New York, 1979., p.88.

²³ The Buyid princes, who in 324 A.H/A.D. 935-36 and thereafter came to power in various parts of Persia were helped by Mutazilite thinkers in their rise to power and in the establishment of their social ideas while at the same time they propagated the Shi'a sect. From early times the Shi'as and Mutazilites were in agreement on theological matters. Sahil Ibn Abbad, the prime minister of the Dayalamites Muayyad al Dawla and Fakhr al-Dawla, make great efforts to introduce the ideas of Mutazilite thinkers. He invited the people to recognise and accept the philosophical sect of Abu Hashim Jabbai(d. 321 A.H/ A.D. 933) who was one of the great theologians in Islamic history. Another great

Iraq. The Ale-Buwayh were Shi'ite²⁴ and in the course of their reign this sect became official in Iran, Consequently, in the first ten days of Muharram, Shi'ites initiated mourning for *Saidul-Shuhada*²⁵.

Mutazilite scholar, Qazi Abdul- Jabber(d. 414 A.H/ A.D. 1023-24) who was of Persian origin, came to Ray at the invitation of Sohil ilm Abbad in 360A.H/ A.D. 970-971, founder a Mutazilite school in that city and taught and disseminated his own views.

Abbad who placed a high value upon mourning for Hussien and wrote elegies commemorating his death, found what he had been seeking in the ideas and practices of the Mutazilite. The Shi'as, too were in agreement with many of these ideas.

From about the second century of Islamic history a group of scholars and intellectuals engaged in the theoretical discussion of religious beliefs and Islamic theology using logical reasoning and debate. These scholars were active until the sixth Islamic century and were known as 'mutakallimin'(scholastic theologians) while their discipline was called 'ilm e- Kalam' (scholastic theology). They were divided into two differing parties, the Mutazilites and the Asharites. The followers of the Sunni and Shi'a sects were attracted by the thinking of the Asharites and the Mutazilites, respectively, and more or less accepted their views as philosophical principles.

Along with theological concepts such as the unity of God, divine justice, and the creation or eternal existence of the Koran, matters connected with the human condition such as actions and man's responsibility for them constituted the pivot of the arguments of both sects of scholastic theologians. They had widely differing opinions in these areas. The problem was this: Is man the creator of and responsible for his deeds, or had (sic) his actions been predetermined in the past? The Ashrites, who were more often the defenders of the status quo, rejected free will and the freedom of man in his action. The Sunni establishment, from its position of power, preferred comfortable thinking and was close to the Asharites. The unchangeable principle of predestination and the idea that everything had been determined from the beginning of time by divine providence served the interests of the caliphate. The Mutazilite thinkers, on the other hand, held that the intellect was the standard of judgment and they prepared the ground for the exercise of personal judgment(ijtihad) and theoretical discussion in Islam. Their school of philosophy was based upon the principle that man possesses freedom in his actions and is therefore responsible for good and bad behaviour, thus deserving reward and punishment. The Asharite belief that the social behaviour of man is beyond his will power and is within the compass of God's providence was called Zulm(injustice) and they thought it to be far from the "justice" of God. Baktash op. cit., pp.98-100.

²⁴ Shia, means literally partisan or follower, refers to those who consider the succession to the prophet- may God's peace and benediction be upon him- to be the special right of the family of the Prophet and who in the field of the Islamic sciences and culture follow the school of the Household of the Prophet. Allamah Tabatabai op., cit. P.33. See also note 15.

²⁵ The Lord of martyrs that is Imam Hussein (Peace be upon him).

The Shi'ite intended to re-enact history, by commemorating the cruelties of caliphs and the poignant story of Karbela, to express the great one's devotion and resistance to those who were ruling over the people and who were not suitable for that position. Since then, each year, in the month of Muharram, mourning ceremonies for the martyrdom of Imam Hussein are convened throughout Iran. The sessions of *Rauze Khani*²⁶ were initiated, and gradually the collection of these ceremonies found dramatic forms. *Rauze Khani* still, in 19th and 20th century, as a convenient communication means has been utilised by activists in religious and political form. Let us look at following excerpt, taken from the *Rauze* sermon given by late *Sayyid Mahmud Taleghani* during the month of Muharram in 1963 just a few days prior to the riots and demonstrations against the Shah and the government which resulted in a considerable loss of life.

"This is one of Imam Husain's speeches and its aim was to make his goal clear to everybody..."People, God's prophet has said that if there is an oppressive Sultan breaking God's promises, committing sin among the people, disregarding God's orders and acting against God's messenger, it is the *duty* of every one who is

²⁶ *Rauze-Khani* (Rawdeh-Khani), that combination of sermon, recitation of poem and Quranic verses and drama which depicts the tragic life of the different Imams(one who stands at the head of the religious community or is one who is the leader of the congregational prayers), particularly Imam Husayn. Although the Rawdeh began to be practiced widely only during the Safavid period, it has become one of the most widespread and influential of religious acts in the Shiite world and leaves a profound mark upon the whole community. The Rawdeh is performed most of all during the Islamic months of Muharram and Safar during which the tragedy of Karbela and its aftermath took place. Allamah Tabatabai op. cit., p.232.

"To-day *Rauze* usually begins with the singing of panegyric to the prophet and the saints by a man called Maddah(encomiast). It is a combination of recitation and singing in slow cadences. This paves the way for a *Rauza-Khani*(also known as *Waiz*) who is a well-trained preacher who alternates storytelling with songs about Hussein and attendant martyrs. Through the choice of episodes and the modulation of his voice, he is able to excite and manipulate the emotions of the audience and to arouse among the participants a unity of feeling of great intensity."

Chelkowski, P "Popular Entertainment, Media and Social Change in Twentieth-century Iran" (Article No:21) *The Cambridge History of Iran* vol,7 Cambridge University Press, 1991., p.771.

aware of these to stand against him to try to change him either with advice, or if this is not possible, with *power*. If one keeps quiet, then God will give him the same punishment as he gives to the Sultan. Because by being quiet, he has acted as his partner in crime." Then, in a loud emotional voice, *Taleghani* turned to the audience and still quoting Husain said, "You have written letters to me and promised to help me and stay beside me (referring to the people of Kufa). If you are still willing to keep your promise, I am Husain, the son of Ali and the son of Fatima who is the daughter of God's prophet. "Here the point is that the audience are being invited to support the current religious power in the society for any political activities, namely support of the Ulama (Husain's spiritual heirs) against an oppressive government."²⁷

Massoudieh refers us to the earliest form of preaching on the heartrending tragedy of Karbela. He writes:

"The adherent of Shi'ite, immediately after the event of Karbela, created a kind of mourning ceremony but they were compelled to perform their ceremony in hiding, since the Caliphate of *Ommiad* (749-771 A.D.) were headstrong enemies of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) and his family".

He adds:

"between the seventh to ninth centuries A.D. , gradually, the modality of mourning ceremonies were improved so that ,in the ninth century ,it became feasible to be shown two persons in disguise of Imam Ali and Imam Hussein amongst the group of mourners."²⁸

Edward Brown²⁹ in his book The Literary History of Persia, on the institution of mourning for the chief of martyrs at Baghdad (in A.H. 352 or 963 A.D.) quotes:

²⁷ Gustav, Thaiss op. cit., pp.359-360.

²⁸ Massoudieh , Mohammad Taghi The Religious Music of Iran Vol one, "The Music of Taziye" Soroosh Press ,Tehran ,1988., p.11.

²⁹ Brown, Edward.G, A Literary History of Persia Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, vol. 4, p.31.

"It is related in the history of *Ibn-i-Kathir* the Syrian that *Muizzud-Dowlah Ahmad Ibn Buwayh* issued orders in Baghdad that during the first ten days of Muharram all bazaars of Baghdad should be closed and that the people should wear black for mourning and betake themselves to mourning for the chief of martyrs the Imam Hussein. Since this procedure was not customary in Baghdad the Sunnye doctors regarded it as a great innovation, but since they had no control over Muizzud-Dowlah they could do nothing to stop it".³⁰

Therefore every year until the collapse of the *Daylamite* or Buwayhid dynasty the custom of mourning was observed by the Shi'ite in all countries during the first ten days of Muharram. In Baghdad it continued until the early days of the reign of the Toghril the Saljug (Seljuk).³¹

The information used by Brown was originally compiled by *Izzuddin Ali-Ibn Ale-Asyr* in The Complete and Great History of Islam and Iran.³²

"In the first days of Muharram in this year, 352 A.H. Muizzud Dowlah the Daylamite ordered people to close their shops for the sake of Hussein-Ibn-Ali, to shut the markets, suspend all transactions and start wailing and traversing the cities slapping themselves. The people did such things and because the Shi'ites had the King's agreement, the Sunnis were powerless to prevent these activities."³³

Mazzaoui on the attitude of Buyid ruler in the light of Muharram ceremonies and other religious activities remarks:

"Here we have what may perhaps be one of the earliest descriptions of the mourningful days of Muharram. It is in fact the

³⁰ Though Ali'l Qasem al Baghdadi puts an opposite point of view. He suggests that the work is a repertoire of theatrical scenes played in tenth century Baghdad, put together by the author to mock Shiite piety and depict every day life in Baghdad. Moreh op. cit., p. 96.

³¹ Name of a king of Saljukian dynasty. (A.H. 429-455/ A.D.1037-1063)

³² Kamel-o-l Tawarikh in 12 volumes written by Ali - ibn - Mohammed - ibn Abdul Karim Abdul Valid, Known as Ibn-e-Asyr.

³³ Quoted Meskub, Shahrokh Sogh-e Siavoush (Mourning for Siavoush) Tehran, Kharazmi Publisher, 1975., pp .87-88.

tenth of Muharram, the day of Ashura. The order comes from above, from the Shi'a Buyid ruler of the land (the Sunni *Abbasid* caliphate is in eclipse).

In the same year A.H. 352, on the tenth day of the last month *Dhu al-Hijjah*, the anniversary of the Day of *Ghadir Khumm*, Ibn-Kathir details a festive and happy Shi'a holiday as follow: 'On the tenth of *Dhu-al Hijjah* of this year [i.e., A.H 352] *Muizz al- Dawlah ibn Buwayh* ordered that Baghdad should be decorated and the markets be open at night as during the holidays; and that the drums be beaten and the bugles sounded , fires lit at the entries to the houses of army commanders(*umara*) and the police (sing. *Shurtah*), in happy commemoration of the feast of *Ghadir-e Khumm*. It was a strong and memorable well-attended (mashhud) occasion, and an ugly, flagrant, and reprehensible innovation (bida'h)."

Mazzaoui uses Ibn Kathir's description on the Muharram activity, during the course of Buyid dynasty as a earliest entries and adds:

"Over the next several years, and until the end of the Buyid regime and the coming of the Seljuks to power, Ibn Kathir makes similar entries describing these Muharram-Ashura activities. In this next entry he uses the term 'aza' al Hussein, and describes the fighting that took place in the city between the Shi'ites(ar-Rawafid) and the Sunnis(Ahl as-sunnah)."³⁴

Ali Asghar Faghihi also writes:

"The Ashura (tenth day of Muharram) in 352 A.H and thereafter was a common holiday, and mourning groups starting from the *Karakh* locality in Baghdad moved around the streets and avenues, lamenting, complaining and mourning. After a while, mourning groups were formed in Egypt. In those days, and especially in the time of *Fatimites*"³⁵, the Muharram processions

34 Quoted Mazzaoui, Michell M "Shi'sm and Ashura in South Lebanon" (Article No:18) *Taziye/ Ritual and Drama in Iran* ed Chelkowski 1979., pp.231-232.

35 A dynasty ruling Egypt 908-1171 A.D.

The mourning for Hussein associated with the Buyid period and the rule of the Shi'a Fatimids also spread to Egypt. During the reign of Mu'izz Al- Din Allah(360 A.H/ A.D 970) the Egyptian Shi'a observed the period of Ashura as days of sorrow and grief, and they recited dirges in their mourning rites. During the prime ministry of Afzal Ibn Badr al- Din, mats were laid down in Cairo's Husseini mosque and Afzal took his place in the heart of the congregation with a judge seated on his right and a missionary on his left. Poets recited elegies which they had written in commemoration of the oppression and martyrdom of Hussein amidst the wailing and keening and chanting of the crowd. Baktash op. cit., p.98.

were performed every year. Because of this, markets were closed and people stood in groups while, chanting songs together, they eulogized for Karbela and moved towards the mosques." ³⁶

As we can see, with the encouragement and support of the *Ale-Buwayh* dynasty³⁷, mourning rituals were held for Shi'ite leaders, and until several centuries thereafter the rituals consisted of reiterating the sufferings and martyrdom of Imam Hussein and between 72, or eighty two, of his companions, including women and children³⁸. Perhaps the first man to compose material about the martyrdom was

³⁶ Faghihi Ali Asghar Keyhan Farhangi third year No:6, p.10.

³⁷ Sahib ibn Abbad, the famous prime minister and poet of the Buyids who had a special interest in propagating the mourning for Hussein, wrote many odes eulogizing the Imam which were recited during the mourning ceremonies of Ashura in order to induce and encourage the mourners to weep. In one of these elegies he said:

"The blood of the friends of the Prophet Muhammad is flowing; Our tears pain plentifully. Let there be infinite curses and blame upon his enemies in the past and the future. Distress yourselves about what befell the children. Now listen to the story of the martyrdom and how they deprived Hussein of water; and when he was fighting on the plain of Karbela how they behaved meanly and unjustly. They cut off the head of a descendant of the Prophet in that fiery land : But the Imam lives, his foot in the stirrup and mounted upon his horse. He will not be killed! then the sinners and the merciless attacked the prophet's family. Fly to salvation while there is still the chance, hurry! Shemr the bastard of Ibn al- Baghi struck his sword on the ground while laughing. This is a kindness to the Prophet and is pleasing! Then the soldiers of the Banu Hind moved out with the heads of the descendants of the Chosen Prophet fixed to the points of their lances. The angels in heaven bewailed their deaths and have wept so copiously that water is flowing from the leaves of the trees and plants. Then you must weep for a while; for after this tragedy of Taff, laughter is unlawful". Baktash op. cit., pp.97-98.

³⁸ Ehsan Yarshater has paralleled the tragedy of Karbela to the memorial of Zarer (Ayadgar i Zareran), a Middle Persian work which has survived from Sassanian times and which was based on an older, Parthian original. It must have been sung for centuries by bards and minstrels(gosan in Parthian) before it was committed to writing. He adds:" A religious epic like the Passion of the Imam, it is centered on the figure of Zarer, a dedicated and valiant defender of the faith.

" Vishtasb, the holy king of the Zoroastrian church, is threatened by Arjasb, the king of the Chionites, who objects to Vishtasp's conversion to the religion of Zoroaster and descends on him with a mighty army. Against all odds, Zarer volunteers to go into battle against the enemy. He is slain at the hand of Bidarafsh, Arjasb's wily Brother.

Two aspects of this tragedy may be noted. One is that the entire outcome of the event is known to Zarer and his kinsmen. Before the war begins, King Vishtasp summons the sage Jamasp and asks him to reveal the fate of the battle. In a prophecy laden with lament he reveals the extent of the calamities which await the royal house. In particular, he tells of

*Molalana Hussein Waiz Kashefi*³⁹, one of the well known preachers and writers of the *Taimuri* period⁴⁰ and the author of the book Rowzat-Al-Shuhada or The Garden of the Martyrs. Thereafter, his work was used as a focus and a form of guidance when worshippers convened for lamentations, mourning and narration of the events in the book.

The book of Rowzat-Al-Shuhada consists ten chapters as follows:

The First chapter is on the Prophets; Adam, Noah, Job and Zakaria (the father of John the Baptist.)

The Second chapter is on the oppression of *Korayshite* and the infidels with the Prophet Mohammed.

The Third chapter is on the death of the Prophet Mohammed.

The Fourth chapter is on Fatimah the daughter of the Prophet.

The Fifth chapter is on Imam Ali.

The Sixth chapter is on Imam Hassan.

The Seventh chapter is on Imam Hussein.

The Eight chapter tells the story of the Martyrdom of Moslem

The ninth chapter narrates the arriving , fighting and Martyrdom of Imam Hussein.

The Tenth chapter is on the events which happened upon the family of Imam Hussein after the battle of Karbela.

We will look at *Kashefi's* book critically.

how the valorous Zarer will be treacherously killed by the ruthless Bidarafsh. He predicts that twenty-three of the king's brothers and sons will be slain. Yarshter Ta'ziveh and Pre-Islamic Mourning Rites in Iran, p.89.

³⁹ Kamalod-din Hussein -ibn-Ali Waiez Kashefi was born in the first half of the 9th century of Luner Hijri in Sabzevar, in Iran, and in 910 died in Harat. Saied Nafici writes: "Rowzat-al-Shohda is a famous book on Karbela and was being read for long time in pulpits so the idea of Rauze-khani is adapted from this book. Nafisi Saied, The History of Prose and Poetry in Iran, first volume Foroughi pub 1965, Tehran, p.245ff.

⁴⁰ Taimuri, related to the dynasty, established by Tamer-Lane.

Later, other books were written in this field. Amongst the well known books Jalal Asgar⁴¹ introduces us the book of *Juhary* called Tufanu'l-Buka , written between 1674-1694 during the reign of Shah Sulayman, which consists of twelve chapters and a section as an additions to the book. The author has called his chapters *Atesh Kadeh*("fire-temple") or ("Fire-Holders"). Every chapter is subdivided into *Shu'lahs* or "Flames". Each Shu'lah is an episode which could be used by the director of Taziyeh.

Jalal Asgar shows the following chart as the content of the book:

<u><i>Atesh Kadeh</i></u>	<u><i>Subject Matter</i></u>	<u><i>Shu'lah</i></u>	<u><i>Pages</i></u>
One	Muhammad	5	13-40
Two	Fatima	9	41-80
Three	Ali	7	81-122
Four	Hassan's Martyrdom	2	123-133
Five	Husain's Sorrow ⁴²	5	134-257
Six	Zain al Abdin	11	257-291
Seven	Husain's Followers	5	292-304
Eight	Martyrdom of Imam Baghir and Imam Jafar	2	305-313
Nine	Martyrdom of Imam Musa	2	314-321
Ten	Ali Ibn Musa	2	322-329
Eleven	Imam Muhammad Baghir	2	330-335
Twelve	Imam Hassan Askan	2	335-339

Gradually, for added poignancy and effect on the audience, several people began to consider ways in which to re-enact the circumstances surrounding the

⁴¹ Asgar, Jalal A Historical Study of The Origins of The Persian Passion Plays University of Southern California Ph.D, 1963., pp.153-154.

⁴² Although the title indicates that there are five Shu'lahs, or sections, actually this chapter contains forty Shu'lah. Ibid., p.154.

Karbela catastrophe. "At the beginning these performances were silent and participants in these appeared in suitable costume, mounted on horse-back or on foot".⁴³ In time, the role of *Shabih*⁴⁴, or so-called actors, developed. This evolved because of the custom whereby a narrator would relate the tale, while standing motionless next to the pulpit, as the participants enacted the text for greater effect. Developments prior to the breast-beating mourners⁴⁵ included the

43 Quoted Aryan Pour, Yahya From Saba to Nima (Tehran, Iran: Amir Kabir Press., 1971, p.332. Aryan Pour does not give dates for this development but we should consider all this changes between the eighth and ninth centuries A.D.

44 Shabih is the word for actor. This word has been utilized in The Cambridge Guide to World Theatre, Banham, Martin p.670.

Baktash introduces Shabih as the play of Taziyeh itself which is the natural product of ritual, the harvest of Tashabbuh. *Concerning Tashabbuh he writes:* "The course upon which Taziyeh moved internally was the principle of Tashabbuh(imitation). This principle was operative in the theatre as well as in the purely social sphere in the context of the culture of past centuries. Tashabbuh, in the context of "making a resemblance" (the use of which term was derived from a hadith saying that "whoever makes himself resemble a group is in the category of that group), carried a meaning of quest and aspiration, and expressed the necessity for making one's self resemble the good on the one hand, and for keeping one's distance from evil and emulation of the enemies of religion on the other. In the sixth Islamic century, the meaning of Tashabbuh was stressed and used to justify the rituals of Muharram mourning. This new interpretation of tashabuh in mourning with regard to impersonation and emulation was made by one of the major Mutazilite scholar. Abul-Qassem Mahmud ibn Umar Zamkhshari(467-538A.H./ A.D.1074-1143) was a Persian and one of the last of the famous theologians. He wrote a book about education entitled Atwaqudh fil Dhahab Muawiz wal- Khatb in which he explained that according to religious traditions anyone who weeps for Hussein is certainly destined to join him in eternity. He added that anyone who weeps for himself and causes others to weep is one of the good, based on the saying, "whoever makes himself resemble(tashabbuh) a group is in the category of that group," and the same merit shall accrue to him. That is, he prepared the theoretical ground for "imitation" and gave importance and value to the act of causing weeping through any means. Maqtal-Khani (recital of Martyrdom stories), the descriptive narrative of the tragedy of Karbela, is one means which was partly inspired by the views of Zamakhshari. Baktash op. cit., pp.101-102.

45 At the beginning, between the period of Timuri to the end of the Zandian dynasty, on mourning days for the martyrs of Karbela, groups of people were formed who expressed their devotion by breast-beating and beating with chains together with symbolic sounds. They carried signs and colours which were like war equipment. Singing was in unison, mourning songs reminding people of the incident of Karbela which carried on the rituals.

Chelkowski writes: The processions are known as Dasta. Until the present time they constitute the major Muharam observances. Group of men and boys rhythmically beat their heads and breast with their palms or else with swords, knives, or stone. Back-beating

inception of a model likeness of the martyrs dressed to be paraded before the spectators, while a narrator related incidents from the Karbela tragedy.

These demonstrations reached a zenith during the Safavian⁴⁶ reign. We have traces of evidence which charts the progress of these rituals through the Safavian dynasty and thereafter.

Jalal Asgar points out "that there is no doubt that after *Tugril the Saljug* stopped the ceremonies, there was a need to revitalize them. Thus the Safavians did not organize the ritual but they popularized it."⁴⁷

Mohammed Djafar Mahjub commenting on the development of Taziyeh during the course of the Safavian dynasty brings to some extent, a contrary view. He relates that there is no trace of Taziyeh material in this period except a kind of poetry in the style of the verses of Taziyeh. He identifies Sabahi Bidguli(died 1218A.H./A.D.1802) as the 'earliest poet. However, Mahjub raises interesting questions while rejecting the idea of the existence of Taziyeh in the period of Safavid. He goes further, refuting the theory which said that there was no relation between the religious play in Europe and Taziyeh in Iran, by stating that "the tradition of staging and giving life to the events at Karbela came to Persia from Europe". Nevertheless he points out that Taziyeh is not a blind imitation of

with chains is still common. These blood-letting activists are often interspersed with mournful chants initiated by a leader. Others carry elaborate standards ,called *alam*, which are symbolic of Hussein's army, so that the standard bearers and participants of the parade became the equivalent of Hussein's troop, ready for self- sacrifice. Chelkowski Article No:21 The Cambridge History of Iran vol 7, p.771.

It should be pointed out that since the beginning of the present Islamic rule in Iran it has been strictly forbidden to use sword , knife and stone during the course of any mourning occasions.

⁴⁶ Safavian dynasty reigned from about the year 1500 A.D. till the usurpation of Nadir Shah in 1786- were named after *Ismaiel Safi*, the first Monarch of this House.

⁴⁷ Jalal, Asgar op. cit., pp.223-224.

western religious drama, which arose from sources and elements thousands (sic) of years earlier.⁴⁸

Hassan Mashhon who gives us information regarding Taziyeh-during the rule of *Karim Khan Zand* and the Kajar-says:

"During the course of *Fath Ali Shah* the relation between Iran and Russia developed. Therefore Iranian officials and people found an opportunity to be familiar with theatre and opera in Russia. Consequently they sought to perform works of religious significance in their own land"

Then he brings in question the impact of Karim Khan Zand with this sort of artistic activity. Mashhon writes:

"*Karim Khan Zand* (A.D.1779-1750-A.H.1103-1163) was informed on tragedy by one of European ambassadors. After that he ordered to be performed a scene of the event of Karbela . This scene made a sorrowful play which later was called Taziyeh. As if for the first ten years of the governorship of Karim Khan Zand Taziyeh performed in the court."⁴⁹

Mehdi Forough on the basis of this evidence says:

"It was completely a national drama, strongly influenced throughout by the national feeling in which it originated. It can easily be detected, mixed with the ideological and religious myths in every Persian Passion play."⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Mahjub, Muhammad Ja'far " The Effect of European Theatre and the Influence of Its Theatrical Methods Upon Taziyeh" Taziyeh/ Ritual and Drama in Iran ed. Chelkowski, P, New York, 1979., pp.144-145.

⁴⁹ Mashhon, Hassan The religious Music of Iran and the role of it in the expanding of national music of Iran Shiraz Arts Festival 1971., p.34.

⁵⁰ Forough , Mehdi A Comparative Study of Abraham's Sacrifice in Persian Passion Plays and Western Mystery Plays Iran, 1952., p.17.

Peter Chelkowski based upon the chronological accounts written by travellers to Iran , who we will look at in section five, has summarised this development in the Safavian period as follows:

"The processions became larger and more colourful each year. There was an increasing number of costumed characters on horses or camels, and there were more and more visual scenes, depicting either the events leading up to the Karbela slaughter or the tragedy itself. Most of these presentations were in the form of living tableaux staged on moving platforms. Some writers described the make- believe battles representing the small group with Hussein fighting gallantly, while outnumbered by the much larger army of their opponents. The development of *Ruzeh-Khani* (Rowzih-Khani) can also be seen to turn into a "one man show" through these demonstrations. All of these accounts demonstrate the progression of dramatic and theatrical qualities of the Muharram observances which were bound eventually to give rise birth to the Taziyeh drama."⁵¹



⁵¹ Chelkowski , P "Bibliographical Spectrum" (Article No:20) Taziyeh/ Ritual and Drama in Iran ed, Chelkowski p.257.

CHAPTER THREE



*From the book of Shabih Khani the ancient sample of Iranian Theatre
ed Anassori, Jaber Tehran, 1992. Designed by Farhad Narestani.*

Chapter three

The true roots of Taziyeh

a; Historical ground of dramatic features:

The study of the Passion play in Iran proves to us that any research seeking to study an aspect of the cultural life of Iran, especially some feature which has existed across a long period of time, will run into the problem of establishing concrete evidence to support the research. Despite a mass of available material on the general history of Iran very little exists on the drama and dance created during the historical periods.

Through the whole of their earlier history the Iranians were primarily pastoral or agriculturists who lived as a thinly scattered population in a vast but mostly dry land. Perhaps, this is one of the major reasons for their dispersion. Herzfeld writes:

"The whole Near East, its plains and mountains, has been inhabited by man since the stone age, and compared with European sites of the same age the oriental sites show a high degree of culture. With the aeneolithic age, the introduction of copper separation begins. The mountain lands, occupied since the Palaeolithic period, and hence more advanced, remain behind. The alluvial lands like Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria afforded easier conditions for settling in villages and towns. Iran from this period, was to Babylonian as northern Europe was to the Mediterranean countries in the second and the early first Millennia B.C. After 3000 B.C. Babylonian enters into the light of history, producing writing that we can read".¹

1 Herzfeld, Ernst.E Archaeological History of Iran London Published for the British Academy by Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1935., Lecture 1, p.1.

Following this there appeared dynasties, some fortunate, others unfortunate, who pursued the cultivation of the land on one hand and defended themselves against intruders who sought war, exerting their cultural and political influence upon them.

Between the first and second Millennium B.C. the tribe of Indo-Iranians stayed on the Iranian plateau. Beizai, on the historical divisions of the Iranian dynasties and the inevitability of the influence of the old lands of east and west upon each other, quotes:

" In about the eighth century B.C the first Aryan tribe who rose to power in Persia was the Medes. The Achaemenian after the winning of the kingdom of Medes , in B.C 550, came to power and expanded their realm. Then the Seleucid (B.C. 305/304, named from Alexander's general Seleucius) who were Greeks in origin came to power and for a short time ruled over Persia. Afterwards the Parthians (B.C. 238) who were interested in the Greeks and Roman culture governed the land of Persia. Then the Sassanian dynasty(A.D. 226-633) who were opposed to the Parthians governed Iran."²

During the course of these dynasties something in the light of drama and other artistic features should have occurred. Unfortunately there has been limited research work exploring dramatic aspects amongst the cultural activities existing in the eastern lands, Persia in particular. For example, Beizai first tries to find dramatic evidence amongst the Persian Zoroastrians and their probable influence upon other lands.

On dance, Yahya Zoka in his description of the top of a gun metal flag drawing from the seventh century B.C. which is kept in the J.L. Wintrop collection (figure No:2) writes:

2 Beizai , Bahram A Study on Iranian Theatre Tehran, 1965., p.19.

"On the top of this reticular gun-metal flag, three images of gods are shown. The medial god, which in degree is higher than the others, has put his foot over the sun and the other two dancing hand in hand have put their feet over the back of a thundering lion, as if the designer wished to illustrate the rotation of the sun from the East to the West."



Figure two

Zoka recognises this figure as representing some form of dance, an opinion he reached after examining many such objects to assess their significance. But after this era until the establishment of the Emperors of *Medes* and *Achaemenians* of B.C , in spite of the fact that it is thought that dance and drama among these peoples must certainly have existed, there is no evidence or traces to prove it or at least none has been discovered.³

Herzfeld remarks:

"Small objects of Art from that period of old Iran, showing human representations, are extremely rare. In 1923 I saw, in the Russian Consulate at Isfahan, a little bronze figure of a captive resembling closely the file of captives on the *Annubanini* sculpture at Sarpul, but discovered near Isfahan. Two diminutive figurines of stone come from *Nihavand*, one of them a naked captive, the other wearing a pigtail.

Not of higher artistic merit, but of greater historical significance, are the designs in repousse on a bronze vessel in my

³ Zoka, Yahya "The History of Dance in Iran" *Honar va Mardom*(Art and People) No:189-190 Ministry of Culture and Arts, 1976 p.7.

collection from *Nihavand* (figure No:3). The subject is a festive procession. Four gods on their thrones, which look like small foot-stools, are preserved. They all seem to hold a fruit or flower. Of another seated figure, in the opposite direction, only a fragment remains. To the right four or five men are walking, two of them with musical instruments, two clapping their hands. The dress is uniformly the *Sumerian* flounced and tufted garment..."⁴

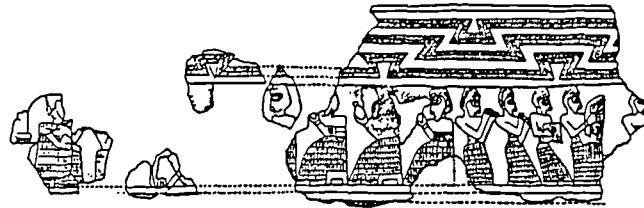


Figure Three Fragments of bronze vessel from Nihavand. $\frac{1}{3}$ nat. size.

Bahram Beizai, quoting Zoka, on a form of dance related to the first half of second millennium B.C., writes:

"On a piece of a small earthenware dish is a picture of two dancers, part of a communal group, wearing masks of kid. Presumably the motif is repeated all round the dish. Evidently the role of these dancers indicates a kind of religious worship that was running in this period of time, namely, the praising of the tree of life by dancers".⁵ (figure No:4)

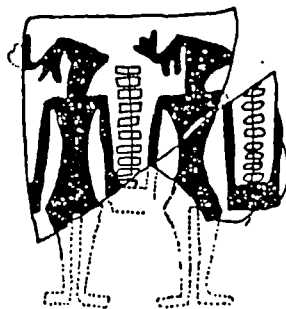


Figure Four

4 Herzfeld, Ernst.E Archaeological History of Iran Published for the British Academy, London, 1935., pp.-8.

5 Beizai, Bahram A Study on Iranian Theatre Tehran 1965., pp.19-20.

Aside from the dance, which has been found difficult to trace, it must be thought that during the course of the plundering of this land by alien emperors or the conquest of other lands by Iranian Emperors- taking into consideration the waxing and waving of the kingdom- some kinds of documents recording the existence of drama have been destroyed.⁶ In default of finding these documents or reconstructing them, it is worth looking at the later testimonies of witnesses to the events and occasions which comprise the history of Iran and which indicate traces of the roots of drama in this wide land. Perhaps these fragments can be joined together to create a basis for the examination of religious drama which this thesis is attempting to set out. These fragmentary testimonies arise principally from two sources. Firstly accounts of the historic events of Iran. Secondly, descriptions of rites, cult and religious beliefs which in recent years some commentators have argued have credentials for being considered as drama. "The justification of this rests upon ritual theories of drama and contemporary anthropological thought which seek to establish theatrical and religious affinities."⁷ In order to this we must begin in the pre-Islamic period.

The most significant impact of historical influence could be traced when Persian, Greeks and Romans had contact or conflicted with each other.

"The conquest of the Achaemenid empire by Alexander(B.C. 331-324) and the subsequent establishment of the Hellenistic states, is the most important event in the history of the ancient New East. In a sense it marks the end of that ancient

6 Sykes writes: "The history of Persia as forming part of the Eurasian continent has from one point of view consisted of a record of wave after wave of invasion by tribes whose conquest was usually attended with much human suffering. Sykes,Percy A History of Persia Macmillan and Co, London, 1930., volume, two p.70.

7 Greetz , Clifford Local Knowledge Further. Essays in Interpretive Anthropology Basic Books, Inc., Publishers New York 1983 ,p.27. (See also Turner V. and Schechner)

history and the beginning a new era, an era of an oecumenical culture generally called Hellenism."⁸

Ghirshman comments on this influence when he says:

"As regards the outward and material aspects of civilization, Hellenism undoubtedly made far-reaching and relatively rapid progress, but it had far less influence on the spiritual and religious life of the people.... '... In general Hellenism may be said to have suffered a defeat in Iran'.⁹

It should be pointed out that by this time Persians themselves were concerned to hold forth their own religious beliefs and observances alongside other cultural and political aspects.

Mary Boyce writes:

"Notices by classical writers suggest that at this time of their first encounter with the Greeks, in Asia Minor, the Persians were already Zoroastrians; and learning about Zoroaster from them, the Greeks naturally considered him to be a Persian prophet and 'master of Magi'. They learnt of him, moreover, as a figure of immense antiquity".¹⁰

"The sedentary population of eastern Iran was constantly exposed to the attacks and depredations of invading nomads, and it may be that this state of affairs gave rise to the idea expounded by Zoroaster¹¹ that the world was ruled by two principles, Good and Evil- the first being a kind of hypothesis of Ahuramazda, the second a malevolent spirit, Ahriman. Ahurmazda was surrounded

⁸ Quoted Frye, Richard, N The Heritage of Persia: History of Civilisation London, Cordinal publisher, 1976., p.143.

⁹ Quoted Ghirshman, R Iran Penguin Books England 1978. p.353.

¹⁰ Boyce, Mary Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practice Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1979. p.49.

¹¹ During the Achaemenian period the Mazdian religion reformed by Zoroaster began to spread through the Empire. The date of the prophet is still in dispute. It is thought that he was born in Media but was forced to leave his native province to preach in eastern Iran, where his teaching attracted followers, from Ghirishman op. cit., p.161.

by divine assistants , some of whom were probably ancient divinities, worshipped originally in the guise of natural forces. The struggle between these two spirits, which stood for an opposition between thought and intelligence, was to end in victory for the Good Spirit."¹²

According to the Zoroastrian tradition, a form of dramatic convention existed that is based on the sanctity of fire¹³. Yet except for gathering people round a lit fire and preparing food and enjoying themselves there seems no more evidence to support this.

Beizai remarks: "The first trace of formal representation is in a hymn of the *Avesta*¹⁴ in ceremonies by the Magus, where the verses take the form of dialogue. The progress of that towards an abstracted form of drama has not been clear to date."¹⁵ Then Beizai refers us to the annual observance of Gaumata¹⁶, a Magian who claimed to be Bardiya, and he writes: "Apparently the event of Gaumata was held every year in form of drama by representing the character of

12 Quoted Ghrishman Iran London ,Penguin books, 1978., pp.161-162.

13 "Fire was also essential for the stepdwellers, the source of warmth in the bitter winters , and the means of cooking the meat which(whether from wild or domestic animals)was the staple of their diet. In ancient times, when it was a labour to light a fire, it was prudent to keep a hearth fire always burning(the live embers could be carried in a pot on migration);and a cult of everburning fire seems to have been widespread among the Indo-Europeans,who saw a divinity in its flames." Boyce Mary op. cit., p.4.

14 The book of Zoroastrian that was written down shortly before A.D.

15 Beizai op. cit., p.21.

16 "*Cambyes* committed suicide in 521 B.C. The throne of Persia was seized by *Gaumata*, a *Magian*, who claimed to be *Bardiya*, a younger brother of *Cambyes*, whereas that monarch had put Bardiya to death by way of precaution, before leaving Persia for the Egyptian campaign. For some time *Gaumata* was universally recognized, but *Darius* on his return from Egypt penetrated to his castle in *Media* without any followers, except the heads of the great Persian tribes, and slew the impostor" Sykes, Percy A History of Persia Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1922., volume one, pp.12-13.

Gaumata and his trick by an actor."¹⁷ Then Beizai links the events of Crassus, Mirnorozhi and Koseh with Gaumata.

Herodotus¹⁸ writes:

"The Persian observe this day with one accord, and keep it more strictly than any other in the whole year. It is then that they hold the great festival which they call the *Magophonia*. No *Magus* may show himself abroad during the whole time that the feast lasts; but all must remain at home the entire day."¹⁹

The play called The Persians was written by Aeschylus in 472 B.C. eight years after the war of Salamis -dealing with the battle which resulted in the victory of Greeks over Persians-²⁰ and was only possible because they had spent

¹⁷ Beizai op. cit., p.25.

¹⁸ Herodotus is one whose writings have been the basis for both historians and playwrights. Mehdi Forough in his research on "Iran and the great dramatist in the world" introduces one of the earliest tragedies in the English literature based upon the History of Herodotus.

This tragedy is called "Tragedy of *Cambyses* King of Persia" by Thomas Preston written in 1569-70 during the course of the reign of Queen Elizabeth the First. This tragedy in five acts tells the story of *Cambyses*. In the third act the case of Bardiya is rendered.

¹⁹ The history of Herodotus (translated by George Rawlson) vol one J.M Dent and Sons , London 1933. p .250.

²⁰ Xerxes, son of Darius and of his wife Atossa, daughter of Cyrus, went forth against Hellas, to take vengeance upon those who had defeated his father at Marathon. But ill fortune befell the king and his army both by land and sea; neither did it avail him that he cast a bridge over the Hellespont and made a canal across the promontory of Mount Athos, and brought myriads of men, by land and sea, to subdue the Greeks. For in the strait between Athens and the island of Salamis the Persian ships were shattered and sunk or put to flight by those of Athens and Lacedaemon and Aegina and Corinth, and Xerxes went homewards on the way by which he had come, leaving his general Mardonius with three hundred thousand men to strive with the Greeks by land: but in the next year they were destroyed near Plataea in Boeotia, by the Lacedaemonians and Athenians and Tegeans. Such was the end of the army which Xerxes left behind him. But the king himself had reached the bridge over the Hellespont, and late and hardly and in sorry plight and with few companions came home unto the Palace of Susa.

some years in Greece. Though one might expect to find some reciprocal influence, there is no trace of this kind of tragi-historical drama in Persia. As a result of this, researchers should now explore indigenous artistic aspects, in an attempt to establish further traits of arts and manifestations of the dramatic within this ancient land.

As Frye points out there may have been stories in western Iran similar to some in the east in the time of the Achaemenids, such as the love story of Zariades and Odatis, told by the Greek, Chares of Mytilene, but this proves nothing about the borrowing of motifs from east by west.²¹

Ganati Atai, who is more interested in the Iranian influence upon Greeks, refers to a Greek drawing deriving from the sixth century B.C saying: "The Olympian heroes are clothed in Iranian style. For example Zeus is shown like Bâl.²² His crown, throne and dress reminds us of Darius, one of the Achaimia's monarchs"²³.

Percy Sykes cites:

"The Parthian possessed no native literature, but were deeply affected by that of *Hellas*. A celebrated passage of Plutarch describes that news of the death of *Crassus* was received while the Parthian Court was enjoying the *Bacchae* of Euripides. The head of the slain Roman was thrown among the courtiers and the actors sang the lyric passage:

"We've hunted down a mighty chase today,
And from the mountains bring the noble prey."²⁴

Morshead, E.D.A. (translator) The Suppliant Maidens, The Persians..(by Aeschylus). London: Macmillan and Co, 1908., P.59.

²¹ Frye, Richard op. cit., p.37.

²² Bâl the god of Babylon equal to Baal of the Phoenician and Zeus of Greek.

²³ Atai op. cit., p.10.

²⁴ Percy Sykes op. cit., volume one, pp.30-31.

Ganati Atai and Beizai both quote from Plutarch a narrative in which *Sorena* one of Parthian commanders prepared a kind of dramatic play, and Beizai writes:

"Sorena sent the head and hand of *Crassus* to *Armania* for *Artaxerxes* but to *Seleucid* he announced that *Crassus* was alive. He then ordered a group to bring to him a captive called *Caius Pactianus*, who looked like *Crassus*. He was dressed up as a female king and also was taught to respond when he was called *Crassus* or Emperor. Then he was mounted on a horse, while Roman officers were riding camels at the head of a division with a train of drummers and buglers and set out towards the populace."

After this scene a group of *Seleucid's* dancers and singers appeared mocking the feminine and timid habits of *Crassus*."²⁵

On the influence or contact between Persians and Romans we have to look at evidence suggested by Beizai by bringing some illustrations of people clothed in Greek or Roman style. For instance (figure No:5) which has been taken from the book by Ghirshmen who raises a point concerning the drama and actors when he adds: "In 65 B.C. *Tiridates* or *Tirdad* the brother of the Iranian monarch who himself was the king of *Armania* was offered, in Rome, a gift by *Nero*, and asked for a farce player as his gift".²⁶

Figure Five Ghirshman Iran



25 Beizai op. cit., p.30. He has quoted this from the book of The Comparison of the Life by Plutarch vol 2 chapter 2 *Crassus*.

26 Ibid., p.29.

A vivid example of a traditional comic play called *Ro-Houzi* (upon a pool) co-existed with the performance of Farce or *Fabula Attellena* in Rome, but serves to show that there clearly was already a developed native Farce or comic tradition in Persia.

In setting *Ro-Houzi* against its Roman counterparts we should consider several conventional aspects; such as the form in which the play and the plot are presented. For example, in both comic drama, dance and singing are integrated as parts of the play. Secondly the characters are similar in their typology. The plots of *Ro-Houzi* are based upon the matters of everyday life, exaggerating and criticizing social issues.

"The main characters of *Ro-houzi* are as follows:

A; Master, a typical bazaar merchant, money-greedy, he uses religion as a shield for his doings. Perhaps similar to Bucco who is self-praising and gluttonous in *Fabula Attellena*.

B; Siyah is a servant known for his black make-up (in some province he has white make-up). He is the dominated character who speaks with an uneducated accent and confuses messages he is to deliver, creating a chain of misunderstanding which are thoroughly risible. He is the central character dispensing humor. He distorts not only linguistic and social patterns but also moves in an uncoordinated fashion. His actions appear to be bad, but in the last analysis lead to good ends. His contorted actions and words make it possible to refer to sexual taboos and gestures, or governmental or political iniquities, provoking good natured cascades of laughter.

C; The wife of Master.

D; Master's daughter and son.

E; The Hakem (ruler of a city), the courtier and chief of police.

F; Fukuli (bow-tie wear)."²⁷

Mehdi Forough believes that: "Because of the excess of six or seven centuries of cultural, political and social relationships between the two lands, this sort of play transferred to Persia".²⁸ In evidence he details a play called Persa written by Plautus. Though Forough offers his comments on this play and tells that Persians imported Farce in their land, yet , this play itself by presenting Persian characters, proves that there was some impact of the two cultures upon each other. However, the point is Persians have no proof to rely on when it becomes an issue. Therefore Forough or other researchers irritably, because of the lack of documentary proof, accept that what is current in Iran has emanated from other lands. If we extend the range of examination it would be seen that the characteristics outlined exist in the folk-drama of many countries, suggesting earlier common roots rather than large-scale later borrowings (see Metin And Drama At The Crossroads where he argues just such a point)

To return to the drama and dramatic aspects, some contemporary researchers on the drama in Iran hint at a kind of entertainment and games in which dramatic aspects can be recognised. Atai writes that in the west of Iran till the early centuries A.D. on the first day of the new year a religious play, was performed. A false king was put on a throne and then was sacrificed.²⁹ Atai adds: "Evidently this play was a scanty explanation of the religious representation of Bâl which was thus:

²⁷ Chelkowski The Cambridge History of Iran Vol 7, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991., pp.776-777.

It should be pointed out that Chelkowski has used the title of Hajji for the character of Master. I Have found the title of Master more suitable than Hajji in here.

²⁸ Forough, Mehdi Honar va Mardom(Art and People) Ministry of Culture and Art pub, Article No;6 Tehran,1970.

²⁹ Atai op. cit., p.19.

"Every year during the festival of the New Year a play on the death and resurrection of Bâl was performed. The ceremony involved two parts, one was concerned with the sufferings of the god and the latter was with the symbolic presentation of the suffering of the gods by clergies in Babylon and the other cities. The god was imprisoned in the infernal world, then his torn body, wrapped in a winding-sheet, was put in a well- guarded tomb. His mother supplicated the gods to help them. A light flashed on the tomb. This light represented the victory of the heavenly gods over the infernal gods and also the resurrection of the dead one. A criminal who had been beheaded on the 8th day of the month shaped into the form of a pig was put by the tomb³⁰....."

A set of more joyful ceremonies are known under the title of "*Mir Noorozi*" (the King of the New Day). Mir Noorozi was an ugly man who was asked to take the throne for the day of New Year, as a mock king. During his reign he was able to order mock sentences such as imprisoning an impostor or seizing the goods of the wealthy, merely for fun, and to make happiness. Beizai in this respect introduces three historical proofs³¹.

Homayoni³² and Beizai note a play called *Kosseh*³³ (Thin-bearded) They believe that this play appeared after Mir Noorozi but Beizai attempts to

30 Atai op. cit., p.5 and p.5.

31 a: AL-TAFHIM LE-AVAEL SENA-AT AL-TANJIM from Aboryhan-e Bironi ed Jalal Homaie Majlis Press 1930, pp.25-6-7.

b: AJAEB-AL MAKHLOGHAT VA GHARAEB-AL MOJODAT from EMAD AL DIN MOHAMMED GHAZVINI Lekenho(1912) pp.128-9.

c: REZA GHOLI KHAN HEDAYAT Anjoman Ara Dictionary.

The summary of the story- according to the second document of Beizai-is: On the first day of the month of Azar(ninth month of the year, having 30 days) that was called Hormoz(Qrmuzd the son of Anoshivan) it was customary that a man who looked like a clown dressed in worn out clothes and his body rubbed with hot spice, while he had eaten hot food too, was put on a horse or an ass. When he rode down town he pretended he was very hot. He fanned himself, using a hand fan, shouting "I am hot". People laughed at him and threw snow balls at him.

Beizai op. cit., p.33.

32 Homayoni, Sadegh op. cit., p.19.

find a link between these two plays and the play of *Crassus*. He argues on the basis of his three documents and writes:

"The first proof attributes these two plays to the *Sassanid* Period. The second one , merely hints at the appearance of them which have must been some time before Islam and the third document attributes them to *Achaemain*. Therefore if this comment is acceptable it could be assumed that the play of *Crassus* has been taken from that or if the former one is genuine , then, this play has been derived from the *Crassus*."34

Looking at this historical or religious evidence creates a tiny surmise in the light of foregoing story. Though , evidently, there is no link between them.

It is said, based on the story of *Esther*, in the feast of the Jews (Purim), that: *Ahasuerus* (who ruled the country B.C. 486-465) was bent on rewarding *Mardecai* who rescued the King's life by the discovery of a conspiracy. For this

33 The performance of Amir-al-Nayruz in carnival processions of the 'Feast of Fools' in Medieval Islam resembles what Arab historians called *Rukuh al- Kawsaj* (the procession of the thin-bearded), which in ancient Persia was a festival called *Koseh Nishin*(the ride of the thin-bearded) in this festival a play of 'temporary king ' or 'False Amir', which symbolised the expulsion of winter or the driving out of the old year, is acted. Arab historical described the pre-Islamic *Kawsaj* in Persia as:

an old beardless one-eyed figure, representing the departing winter, mounted on an ass(or a cow) or a mule, with a crow in one hand, and a scourge and fan in the other. In this manner he paraded the streets, followed by all ranks of people, from the royal family to the beggar. Amongst many frolics which the populace played with the old man, they sprinkled him alternatively with hot and cold water; whilst he, crying out *gurma, gurma* (ie,gurma,'heat')...

Sometimes he fanned himself, and sometimes lashed his tormentors. He had the privilege of going into every shop, and into every house; where the least delay in presenting him with a piece of money, gave him a right to seize the effects of every trader, and to bespatter the clothes even of the greatest nobles with a mixture of ink, red earth, and water, which he carried in a pot by his side. But all were prepared for *Kausa* at their doors; and their offerings were made the moment of his approach... From the first to the second hour of prayer, the amount of receipts was the property of the old man; and here his pageant ended. He then suddenly disappeared: for after this time, the first person he met in the streets might severely beat him with impunity. Moreh, Shmuel Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature in The Medieval Arab World Edinburgh University Press, 1991 . pp.50-51

See also Metin And Drama at the Crossroads pp.60-64.

34 Beizai op. cit., p.33.

purpose the king , without mentioning the name of Mardeciai to any one, consulted his loyal Vizier, Haman. Haman conceived that Ahasuerus was going to reward him personally. With this in mind he suggested: "For the man whom the king wishes to honour, let there be brought royal robes which the king himself wears, and a horse which the king rides, with a royal crown upon its head. And let the robes and the horse be delivered to one of the king's most honourable officers, and let him attire the man whom the king wishes to honour and lead him mounted on the horse through the city square, calling out as he goes:' See what is done for the man whom the king wishes to honour.' Then the king said to Haman, 'Fetch the robes and the horse at once, as you have said, and do all this for Mardocai the Jew who is in attendance at court. Leave nothing undone of all that you have said".³⁵ Then Mardocai, who had been falsely convicted and sentenced to hang by Haman, was brought. Haman became displeased yet under compulsion he fulfilled the king's order. In the end when everything was disclosed to the King he showed his anger to Haman and hanged him.

This story suggests an affinity with *Mir Noorozi* and may have been the basis for the form underlying the comedy. Apart from the comic aspects of *Mir Noorozi*. If not, the case could be argued that the Purimspiel of *Esther* has been taken from the Persian Festival mentioned earlier, of the pretence of Bardiya. In any case by this example we are able to bring some evidence based upon the convention of representation , to some extent, of the existence of early drama in Iran.

35 The New English Bible Oxford and Cambridge University Press,1970. p.556

b; Mythical ground of dramatic features:

The geographical, social and economical circumstances in which the Iranian tribes struggled to make a living gave rise to myths and to the rites and conventional acts associated with them. In the course of this cultural structuring what had arisen out of material sources became transformed through myth and legend into the basis of religion. Zoroaster's creeds and formulations are the most rigorous and structured of these codifications, by which mythical analogy and subject became religious practice. For instance the decorum and deeds of ancient heroes became attributed to religious heroes. These kind of beliefs, launched into the common culture and developed in literary works are considerable. Some historical evidence indicates that Iranians gave more consideration to cults and religious practices than to other matters, such as political and social affairs. The content of these sorts of beliefs comprises a kind of complaint and opposition of the common people against the oppression of governors or powerful men. In the end of this discussion it may be noted that myth and legend remained in the course of centuries as the property of the common people. The following is an example:

"*Zahhak*(tyrant king in Iranian mythical history)was persuaded by *Eblis* to murder his father in order to be the owner of all his realm and wealth. This was done. Eblis suggested that the land of *Zahhak* be cultivated by date palm so that he would be able to make wine in plenty. *Zahhak* accepted this , and, (in a time of peace) he ordered people to begin cultivation. When Eblis was leaving he kissed *Zahhak's* shoulders. A few days later *Zahhak* felt a pain in his shoulders. Physicians came and went and what they recommended as medicines were not proved efficacious. Later two black serpents thrust their heads out of *Zahhak's* shoulders. Eblis in the guise of a physician, arrived, unannounced and said: "You must not cut them off, rather let food be prepared and given them to eat so that they can be

propitiated. That is the only proper expedient. For food let them have nothing but human brains (his secret intent was to empty the world of people). The friends of Zahhak were forced to prepare the offerings. Judges under threat of death sentences sentenced people unjustly. The righteous friends of Zahhak learned that the processes of justice had been corrupted. Then a commission was formed to investigate the cases but the commissioners were killed. The story continues thus till death comes to the palace. Zahhak ordered all his friends to be killed. They consulted with each other but were not able to make any practicable decision. On the other hand the people started to revolt. Eblis again arrived and assisted Zahhak in suppressing the insurrection. Afterwards Eblis decided to leave again but Zahhak insisted on him staying. Eblis accepted. Once again the people revolted and under the leadership of *Ferydon* proceeded to Zahhak's palace and deposed him. When Ferydon overthrew Zahhak and became the king he ordered to be kindled flames on the roofs of houses whereby the people, those young people who had fled to unknown mountains, could be informed that the satanic kingdom of Zahhak was over and they were safe to come back home - it is said that Armaeal one of Zahhak's secretaries saved one of two youths condemned to die and let him go. The behaviour of Armaeal caused him to be saved by the new judges from punishment- thus the feast of *Sadeh*³⁶ established".³⁷

The detail of this story and more examples could be found in the magnificent epic the *Shahnameh* or "book of kings" produced by *Ferdowsi* the great Moslem poet. Other examples will be brought in when required.

However, in Iranian culture a kind of affinity existed between mythical symbol and historical fact which may be a strong impulse for the purpose of creating a mature drama or at least a major contributory factor to it. A glimpse of the themes and characters supports this. What has been constantly preoccupying Iranian writers is the presentation of the devotions of heroes.

36 This festival is held 50 days before the Norooz.

37 Quoted Talibi, Faramarz "Inspired play from the Shahnamah" *Theatre Quarterly* No:11-12(A Journal devoted to the Theatrical Studies) Namayesh Press, 1990. p.129

These heroic characters, in spite of living in the mortal world, are depicted as leading different lives and suffering different deaths from ordinary people. They devote their lives for the sake of fellow-creatures who are suffering oppression and injustice. On the other hand they are intercessors in the other world, namely, their deaths are sources of new life.

"When *Afrasiyab* prevailed over Iranshahr he besieged *Manouchehr* (Iranian legendary monarch) in *Tabarestan*(ancient *Hyrkania*: modern Mazandaran). *Afrasiyab* granted *Manouchehr* one wish. *Manouchehr* asked for one of his archers to be summoned from Iranshahr. Then an angel appeared and ordered *Manouchehr* to make ready a bow and arrow-as narrated in the Avesta. The learned and pious *Arash* was brought and commanded to take the bow and arrow. *Arash* bared himself stood before the audience and said:

O'king and people, look at my body which is,
Quite healthy without any sores and pain,
But I know well, when I shoot the arrow my,
Body shall be torn to pieces,
Yet I sacrifice myself to you.

Then he got ready and as soon as he shot the arrow, by divine power his body crumbled. The arrow went round the land and turned back to *Tabarestan* and hit a huge walnut tree which was unique in the world. In the end *Afrasiyab* who was unnerved by this event surrendered and thereupon the people were delivered from *Afrasiyab*".³⁸

Abolhassan Nishaboury in *Khazaien-e al Oloum* writes:

" the cause of the building of the citadel of *Bokhara* was *Siawosh* who ran away from his father, *Kikawus*, and crossed the *Amudarya*(Oxus) and came to the court of *Afrasiyab*. He welcomed *Siawosh* and married his daughter to him and it is said that *Afrasiyab* offered him all his dominion. *Siawosh* wished to

38 In narration of *Asrar al Baghiyeh* by Aborihan-e Bironi ed Zakhaov p.22 But this part is from the book of *Sokeh-e Siawosh* by Meskob, Shahrokh Kharazmi pub, Tehran, 1975., pp.95-96.

make a monument in this land because whatever he had been given was only held on loan. Then he built up the citadel of Bokhara and spent most of his time there. It was not long before he was slandered and Afrasiyab murdered him. Siawosh was buried in his place, namely, in the citadel of Bokhara.³⁹

Bokhara's Magus consecrated this place and every year before the rising of the sun in the new year⁴⁰ each person would sacrifice a cock for the sake of Siawosh. Therewith the people of Bokhara became Siawosh's mourners and lamented for him. Musicians played their melody with the title of ' *kine Siawosh*'⁴¹. Story-tellers called it the 'mourning of Magus' and it has been observed for more than three thousand years. (Narshaki, 959-899A.D.348-288-348A.H. history of *Bukhara*)".⁴²

Ehsan Yarshater on the mourning song and weeping of the Magi tells us:

39 It is said in tradition, that *Sodabeh*(Kikawos's wife and the step mother of *Siawosh*) fell in love with Siawosh, invited him to herself but he strictly refused her. *Sodabeh* disappointed, then, distorted the matter and vilified about him thus: She said to her husband that Siawosh had looked upon her. Siawosh denied this to be the case. Yet *Kikawos* ordered him to undergo an ordeal by fire. When this ordeal was undergone and Siawosh safely had come out of the fire, he quit his land towards *Torkestan* to take refuge in the realm of Afrasiab. There he married Farngis but by instigation of *Garsivaz*, *Afrasiab*'s brother, the executioner of *Torkestan*, Siawosh was beheaded in a golden tub. Anassori, Jaber Namayesh and Niayesh In Iran (Drama and Praising In Iran) Jihad Press, Tehran, 1987., P.13.

40 The New Year is celebrated in Spring.

41 The *Kine Siawosh*(mourning of Magus) is one of the celebrated melodies composed by Barbod. Barbod was a musician in the *Sassanid* dynasty. Massoudieh The Religious Music in Iran P.17.

Atai also writes that the musical melodies in the *Sassanid* period were numerous and the most poetical and literary work -in Persian or Arabic-were loaded with musical allusions. He suggests an example and quotes:" It is said that *Chosro-a Sassanian* monarch-loved his horse, *Shabdiz*, very much. He had said I will order the death of one who brings the tidings of the death of *Shabdiz*. Therefore when *Shabdiz* died no one dared to break the news to the king. Barbod was the last resort and was called upon to exert his artistic skills. He composed a touching melody whereby he described the harrowing tale of the illness and death of *Shabdiz* so that he artistically represented the whole story. While the king was listening to the melodies he learned that his beloved horse had died. Then, rising up, he shouted: So tell me *Shabdiz* has died. Barbod courageously confirmed this and said: 'It was the king who said that'.

Ganaty Atai, AbulKhasim. Bonyad-e Namayesh dar Iran (The foundation of Theatre in Iran) Ibn Sina Press, Tehran, 1954., pp.21-23.

42 Namayesh No:5 Publication of the Fine Arts Department Tehran 1958 p.19.

"The people of Bukhara have many a lament (*nuha*) on the slaying of Siyavush, which is known in all regions (*velayat-ha*) and the minstrels have made them into songs which they chant, and the singers (*qawwalan*) call them 'the weeping of the magi' (*geristan-e Mughan*) The last two words are particularly revealing and confirm a mourning cult among the Magi at least of *Sogdiana*."

As we see Yarshater is seeking to find a link between the ceremony of magi and the story of Siawosh hence he adds:

"The religious character of *Siyavush*, although generally obliterated in Islamic sources, has left enough traces to reveal a once powerful religious cult. Tha'alebi records a tradition, according to which cosmic disturbances took place when *Siyavush* was killed: 'a violent wind began to blow, a heavy dust arose and a stagnant darkness spread.' Such phenomena could only point to the sanctity of the slain hero. A faint reference to this aspect may perhaps be seen also in *Siyavush*'s going through the ordeal of fire unscathed. But a more positive indication is found in *Ibn Balkhi*, who recounts that when the news of Siyavush's death reached Iran, his father Kay kavus lamented profusely, saying, "it was not Afrasiyab who killed him, it was I who killed the holy (Rawhani) Siyavush"⁴³

The mourning ceremonies for Siawosh offer indications of some form of dramatic manifestation arising out of the setting of Iranian myths and legends. Beizi has included a pictorial document, from A. Mongait, in which the mourning of Siawosh is illustrated. (fig. No:6) This document is attributed to three centuries before Christ and was excavated in the *Soghdian*- the old province comprising *Samarghand* and *Bokhara*-. In the explanation of this picture it is said that men and women are weeping over Siawosh's misfortune and beating their heads and breasts. A bier is being carried on men's shoulders,

⁴³ Yarshater, Ehsan " Taziye and pre-Islamic Mourning Rites in Iran " (Article No:7) *Taziye/ Ritual and Drama in Iran* ed P.J Chelkowski New York, 1979., pp.90-91.

on which an actor who plays Siawosh's role is lying. Probably some parts of Siawosh's life were also acted out by this actor. ⁴⁴



Figure Six Mourning for Siawosh From *Archaeology in the U.S.S.R*
Beizai, Rahram *A Study on Iranian Theatre*, p 22.

It is said , in legends, that when *Alexander*⁴⁵decided to conquer the world and set off for the Orient, arrived in the land of Siawosh, he forthwith set out for the place in which Siawosh's grave was. He marvelled that the place was like paradise. But the tomb was red, Then his attention was attracted by fresh blood which was boiling forth, while a green tree could be seen growing among the blood. Coincident to this story it is said that there is a link between soil and what is grown in it. So the angel of earth is the enemy of oppressors. The earth never swallows the blood of a wronged one until every oppressor has received his punishment. If unjustified blood is shed on the earth it will boil for ever and a plant will grow up among this blood in memory of the slain. Then

44 See Beizai op. cit., p.23.

45 Alexander defeated the Iranian King Daruis in 331B.C. He became an important part of the Iranian legends. he is popularity known as Iskandar or Skandar.

the plant of Siawosh will never die even if it is cut, since this plant is the symbol of a life after death or is the continuance of the Siawosh's life⁴⁶.

Anassori suggested a correlation between the event of Siawosh and other artistic figures. He writes:

"Drawers of popular painting, by depicting stories like Siawosh on their panel, try to show the blood of innocents pouring into a pot in order to prevent it dropping on the ground".

He adds that:

"The Tribe of *Bakhtyari* (Their region is in West of Iran) still think that if somebody is killed and the *murderer is able to* escape, the bloody clothes of the innocent killed should be boiled in a pot. They believe that the killer will be made anxious and wherever he or she is, will come back to the site of the murder."⁴⁷

The execution of Siawosh happened in summer or, in the other terms, the season of harvest. The story has been remembered for centuries. It is said that still in some villages of Iran as soon as farmers see a corn-flower, the death of Siawosh is remembered, hereupon the first bunch of wheat is left unpicked till the last moment of its life on its stem. When it becomes dry and drops on the ground it must be left for the birds. If this bunch of wheat is reaped the blessing will leave the farm and, even worse, the farmer will die badly. In some villages farmers sacrifice an animal in the event of reaping a field.⁴⁸

After the establishment of Islam in Iran the composition of legendary stories continued, to some extent, preserving the content of the valour and championship of the ancient heroes or with new subject matter, proportional to

46 Anassori in his book called Namayesh va Niayesh dar Iran tries to find an structural affinity between myth and history. He points out that mythical heroes like Siawosh are treated as historical heroes, p.16.

47 Quoted Anasoori op. cit., p.171.

48 See Anasoori The rites and Theatre Tehran, 1979., p.27.

the time, namely, placing two spirits, involving good and evil, against each other, depicting the victory for the good spirit over the evil. Based on the conception that:

"Mankind could not avoid taking part in this struggle, since it also was divided into good men, the upright and pious, and evil-doers and atheists. Each individual is judged after death. The good will go to paradise while the wicked will suffer long punishment." ⁴⁹

These examples have underlying instinctual dramatic aspects yet they have not been, up to now fully considered within the categories of drama.

Beizai ventures a reason when he says that:

"The faith of one God like Zoroastrian and Islam in Iran was less able to accept any form of dramatic representation than those religions which had multiple gods".

Beizai adds that:

"The former ones denied the metaphorical personification and imagination by stressing an absolute God whereas the latter ones maintained more human aspects in their gods".⁵⁰

Jamil Ahmed has considered the function of myth in Islamic beliefs and finds relation between myth and drama:

"It is true that the strict monotheism of Islam does not encourage the growth of mythology. Nevertheless, it cannot be said that Islamic culture is totally barren in such myth making activity".⁵¹

Quoting Kole Omotoso, Jamil Ahmed remarks:

49 Quoted Ghirishman op. cit., p.161.

50 Beizai op. cit., p.2.

51 Ahmed, Jamil Theatre and Islam The Dhaka University Studies, part A, volume 47, no:2, dec 1990. p.85.

'The strong monotheistic way of life professed by Islam, which limits self-criticism and has no toleration for alternate explanations to the events of life, is the reason why theatre has apparently not flourished in Islam'. It is hard to accept this theory as a strict fact though he tries not to generalize this comment and adds: 'This is not to say that there would not be any form of drama or that such a society could not develop its own particular brand of drama. But the point is that if there is a strong monotheistic religion, drama as a literary form cannot exist'.⁵²

C; Literary history of Iran after the advent of Islam:

"Goethe, who was bewitched by the beauty and charm of the poetry of Hafiz, the greatest lyric poet of the fourteenth century in Persia, wrote in his *West-Ostlicher Divan*: 'It is very strange that Persian poetry has no drama. If there had been one dramatic poet, the whole of Persian literature would have gained a different aspect.'⁵³ "

Hereafter we will look at the *literary history of Iran after the advent of Islam*⁵⁴, intending to look at the modality of the appearance of religious literature and finding its relation with the passion play in Iran.. We should point out that in this part we attempt to condense the classical age of Persian literature into a few pages, merely to touch very briefly on a few of the stars in the

See also Kole Omotoso "Arabic Drama and Islamic Belief System in Egypt", in *African Literature Today*(No.8): Drama in Africa, ed. Elderd D.Jones (London, 1976), p.103.

52 In Jamil Ahmed's Article op. cit., p.85.

53 Forough , M A comparative study of Abraham's sacrifice in Persian passion plays and western mystery plays. p.7.

54 It is worth bringing in E.O Lorimer's comment on the ancient Persians. He remarks:" the ancient Persians were a singularly gifted, witty, and humorous race, with a unique aptitude for story telling. Centuries before Christ they were diligent in the collecting of narratives of every kind from every source. Tales from the Arabian Nights Oxford University Press, 1961. p1(introduction).

literary firmament. At any rate we can not avoid quoting the literary works in this period of time, for the purpose of discussion, however abridged.⁵⁵

When the Sassanids in the first half of the seventh century A.D. were defeated by the Arabs, the land of Iran was for about two hundred years controlled by them. Therefore the Arabs became masters of most of Iran. As Nöldek says: "Hellenism, never touched more than the surface of Persian life, but Iran was penetrated to the core by Arabian religion and Arab ways."⁵⁶

The chief primary transition in Iran happened in this epoch, namely, the language⁵⁷ and interests of the people changed as well as their political status.

55 For more information in the light of literature see the book of Edward Granvil Brown entitled Literary History of Persia four volumes, Cambridge 1977, in detail. In brief the book of Reulen Levy in the title of Persian Literature London 1923 could be referred to.

56 Brown E.G op. cit., vol one, p.6.

57 Brown writes: *The history of the Persian language falls, into three well-defined periods*, as follows:

I- The Achaemenian Period(B.C. 550-330),represented by the edicts and proclamations contained in the Persian cuneiform inscriptions, which, though of considerable extent, are similar in character and style, and yield a vocabulary of not much more than 400 separate words. The language represented by these inscriptions, and by them only, is generally called Old Persian.

II- The Sassanian Period(A.D.226-652), represented by inscriptions on monuments, medals, gems, seals, and coins, and by a literature estimated as, roughly speaking, equal in bulk to the Old Testament. This literature is entirely *Zoroastrian* and almost entirely theological and liturgical. The language in which it is written, when disentangled from the extraordinary graphic system, known as *Huzváresh*(Zuwarishn),used to represent it, is little more than a very archaic form of the present speech of Persia devoid of the Arabic element. It is generally known as Pahlavi, sometimes as *Middle Persian*. Properly speaking, the term Pahlavi applies rather to the script than the language, but, following the general usage, we shall retain it in speaking of the official language of Sassanian Persia. This script continued to be used on the coins of the early Caliphs and the independent *Spáh-pats* or *Ispahbadhs* of Tabaristán for more than a century after the Arab conquest; and for at least as long additions continued to be made by the Zoroastrians of Persia to the Pahlavi literature, but the latest of them hardly extend beyond the ninth century of our era. Practically speaking the natural use of what we understand as Pahlavi ceased about a thousand years ago.

During the course of next four centuries numerous books in different subjects like history, astronomy, mathematics, medicine and national histories were translated from the Pahlavi language (the official language of the Sassanid court and the Zoroastrian priesthood) into Arabic. Accordingly, in consequence, the Pahlavi language became weak and was even at length forgotten and gave its place to other Persian dialects which were opposed to Arabic as literary language. But on the one hand Arabic continued to dominate during this Period until the apogee of its domination in fifth and sixth century of Hijri (A.D. Tenth and Eleventh). Hereupon Arabic, beside current dialects, became the chief literary medium in Persia for prose, in particular, and verse. So we find Persian poets addressing their patrons in excellent Arabic verse. "In the seventh century of Hijri (A.D. twelfth), Arabic would have been understood in Persia by all persons of education⁵⁸. On the other hand it was during the course of the Samanid⁵⁹ (fourth century Hijri or A.D. 820 or 850-998) that, in spite of the

III- The Mohammadan Period(from about A.D.900 until the present day). When we talk of "Modern Persian," we mean simply the Persian language as it reappears after the Arab Conquest, and after the adoption of the Mohammadan religion by the vast majority of the inhabitants of Persia. The differences between the late Pahlavi and the earliest form of Modern Persia was, save for the Arabic element generally contained in the latter, merely a difference of script, and script in this case was, at this transition period(The ninth century of our era), mainly a question of religion.

Brown E.G op. cit., vol one, pp.7-8.

58 Kamshad H. writes:" The Ghaznavid, Seljug, and Kharazmian period(A.D.998-1220), when, despite the persistence of the former style , the increasing use of Arabic forms made the language highly decorative.

Modern Persian Prose Literature Cambridge University Press, 1966. p.3.

59 The brilliant Samanid court with its twin capitals of Bukhara and Samarqand inspired a mighty upsurge of Persian national consciousness. A. J. Arberry remarks:" Under the benevolent patronage of these enlightened rulers imitated by wealthy landowners who prospered in this comparatively peaceful kingdom, Persian letters passed from its auspicious infancy into the early promise of strenuous maturity. Arberry, A.J Classical Persian Literature Ruskin House George Allen , London, 1958. p.18.

gradual progress of Arabic, the pre-Islamic dialects remained but "(in place of) Pahlavi's complicated graphic system- to read and write it was a major feat- the legible convenient Arabic characters lent themselves to literary and scientific deliberations"⁶⁰.

It is in this century that leading persons, in the sphere of Arts and literature such as *Rudaki*⁶¹, *Razi*, *Abu Ali Balami*⁶², *Farabi*, *Balkhi* and *Daqiqi* appeared and towards the end of the Samanid period the appearance of *Avicenna-Abu Ali Sina*⁶³, *Al Biruni* and *Ferdowsi* can be noted.

Zabih Allah Safa about the fourth and fifth century A.H.(A.D.11th) writes:

"In particular, these centuries were the mature period of Islamic and Persian literature. They paid more attention to Persian language and edited and translated from Pahlavi into Persian the history of old Iran and the national epics, attributing them to Iranian heroes. Also Pahlavi sources which had been translated into Arabic were converted into Persian. The *Shahnameh of Balkhi* which is the history of Iranian heroes before Islam; or *Abumansouri's Shahnameh* which in A.H. 346 (A.D.969) was collected by *Dehghans*(Farmers) through the order of *Abdol Razegh Tosi*, the governor of *Khorasan*, were amongst these translations. This collection became the best book in prose in this century for its unity of material and the arrangement of subjects"⁶⁴.

60 Kamshad op. cit., p .4.

61 Rudaki the panegyrist of Nasr ibn Ahmad and the first major poet in Persian literature. Arberry op. cit., p.19.

62 He translated Tabari into Persian and so largely created Persian prose style.

63 Ibn Sina was the one who translated Aristotle's poetics. he used the term of qumudhya and traghudhya against comedy and tragedy. Moreh op. cit., p116. Arberry adds:" He has left us a graphic description of the royal library which had been built in Bukhara for the benefit of serious students

It should be pointed out that amongst the written literary works in verse, the Epic of Kings by Ferdowsi⁶⁵ is the best-known work of these centuries. Ferdowsi has preserved for all time the myths, legends and traditions of pre-Islamic Iran in his work. His work is a collection of writings giving a fairly continuous picture of all the cultural history and traditions of the Iranian Empire from before the creation of the known world to Iran's subordination under the Moslem.

...The late Professor Cowell wrote the following noble eulogy:

"Augustus said that he found Rome of brick, and left it marble; and *Ferdausi* found his country almost without a literature and has left her a poem that all succeeding poets could only imitate and never surpass, and which, indeed, can rival them all even in their peculiar styles, and perhaps stands as alone in Asia as Homer's epics in Europe..."⁶⁶.

Safa believes that "Persian literature, in the fourth and fifth centuries, was, strongly influenced by this master-piece".⁶⁷

64 Safa, Zabih Allah A Summary on the Prose and Verse in Iran, Amir Kabir Press, Tehran, 1984., p.16.

65 Ferdowsi(Ferdausi) was an honest and subtle poet. In the book of Shahnameh he repeatedly mentions that a number of stories ,presented in his book, are excerpts from Dehghan sayings. Ferdowsi introduces some of them as Chaj in the Parthian section, Azad Sarv in the chapter of the murder of Rustam. It should be added that the Dehghans were story tellers and there is a strong surmise that they were active till the Mongul(Moghol) period. They have been remembered as high-ranked and well-versed people.

Beizai op. cit., pp.63-64.

Ferdawsii composed the greater part of his Shahnameh under the protective shadow of this great house, but had the ill luck to be obliged to offer it to its destroyer.

66 Sykes, Percy op. cit., vol 2, p.62.

67 Safa op. cit., p.38.

Mehdi Forough in his book called Shahnameh and Adabiat (literature) introduces Ferdowsi as a great Persian epic poet whose book is the most famous verse-epic of Iranian culture.⁶⁸

Forough is one of those who have scrutinized Shahnameh for its dramatic dimensions.

"Ancient nations generally composed their epic works in the early times of tribal life. After which they passed into a phase of history and entered into a high cultural stage. Then the creation of tragedy started. Whereas The Epic of the King was written when the Iranians had passed through a thousand years of gradual development in cultural and intellectual grounds. So undoubtedly this fact influenced the structure of the stories and the literary forms of this magnificent epic masterpiece."⁶⁹

Forough tries to make his examination of the stories of Shahnameh conform with the rules of Aristotle, set out in the book of Poetics, in order to elucidate the affinity of the stories to the structures of tragedy. Though he has maintained the differences between epic poetry and tragedy, he believes that the epic form of the Shahnameh is saturated with the various conventions of tragedy.

Let us look at Aristotle's comment on these two poetic forms.

"Epic poetry and tragedy , as also comedy, dithyrambic poetry, and most flute-playing and lyre-playing, are all, viewed as a whole, modes of imitation. But they differ from one another in three ways, either in their means, or in their objects, or in the manner of their imitations".

On the manner of the imitations Aristotle says:" The third difference in these arts is in the manner in which each kind of object is represented. Given both the same means and the same

68 See Forough, Mehdi Shahnameh and Adabiat 2nd edition, Arts and Culture Press, Tehran, 1984.p.10.

69 Ibid., p.12

kind of object for imitation, one may either speak at one moment in narrative and at another in an assumed character, as Homer does; or one may remain the same throughout, without any such change; or the imitators may represent the whole story dramatically, as though they were actually doing the things described". Aristotle on the resemblance and the differences of epic and tragedy adds: "Epic poetry, then, has been seen to resemble tragedy to this extent, that of being an imitation of serious subjects in meter. It differs from it, however, in that it is in one kind of verse and in narrative form; and also by its length- which is due to its action having no fixed limit of time, whereas tragedy endeavours to keep as far as possible within a single circuit of the sun, or something near that. This, I say, is another point of difference between them, though at first the practice in this respect was just the same in tragedies as in epic poems. They differ also in their constituents, some being common to both and others peculiar to tragedy- hence a judge of good and bad in tragedy is a judge of that in epic poetry also. All the parts of an epic are included in tragedy; but those of tragedy are not all of them to be found in the epic."⁷⁰

After all this argument Forough shows us how we are able to transfer the epic characters of Shahnameh to characters of tragedy. As an example he introduces *Rostam* in the story of "*Rostam and Sohrab*". We see *Rostam* as a pious hero with a sensitive side who kills his beloved son, Sohrab, unknowingly. This story and other stories of the Shahnameh have attracted the attention of some foreign writers so that they have translated or adapted them into their language. Forough gives us the following list: "Sir William Jones was the first English orientalist who translated a part of Shahnameh into English in 1774. In 1838 Rückritt, a German poet, translated the story of Rostam and Sohrab into German and published it.

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) adapted the story of Rostam and Sohrab and created a poem, published in 1853.

⁷⁰ See Branes, Janathan editor The Complete Works of Aristotle Princeton University Press, 1984., Vol two, pp.2316-2320.

Vassili Andrievitch Joukvshi (1783-1852) also translated this story into Russian.

Brown E. G, in his book A Literary History of Persia , in volume two, has given us his magnificent translation of twenty one distiches of this story.

The dramatic potential of the story is revealing by Forough who lists several written plays based on the Shahnameh stories, related to last sixty or seventy years in Iran. Forough has written another book called Shahnameh and dramatic literature in which eighty two plays have been indexed⁷¹.

Faramarz Talibi believes that the first stage of creating drama inspired by this book lies in the form of story telling. He cites: "Story tellers enthusiastically recited the Shahnameh to eager gathered people in a common place." He refers to *Nasser Al Falsaphi's* article and on the flourishing growth of story tellers he adds:

"During the course of the time of *Shah Abbas Safavi*, most cities in Iran were possessed of coffee-houses, different classes of people went there to visit friends or to be amused by poetical contests (capping verses), listening to the verses of *Shahnameh* or other stories, watching a variety of dances and last of all playing games".⁷²

We return to the time before the Safavid dynasty to trace the growth of story-telling. The first evidence of this activity belongs to the third century A.H.(A.D.9th) *Ibn-e Ghotayib* A.H. 213-276(A.D. 834-895) in the fourth volume of Ouyon-Al Akhbar quotes from *Ali* the son of *Hesham* thus: "In *Merv*

71 Forough, Mehdi Shahnameh and dramatic literature The Ministry of Culture and Arts Press, Tehran, 1977.p.37.

72 Talibi, Faramarz "Inspired play from Shahnameh " Theatre Quarterly No:11-12 (A journal devoted the to the theatrical studies), Tehran, Namayesh Press , 1990 ., p.109.

was a story teller who told us a story and moved us to tears.⁷³ Afterwards he played a lute and said": "We should be happy now"⁷⁴.

Beizai construed story telling as a political instrument against the influence of the Arabs in Iran, because it commemorated the ancient heroes by recounting their deeds to the discomfort of the new governors. In consequence subsequent rulers strove to attribute their ancestry to the ancient Iranian kings and heroes. Even after the Moslem invasion when their ascendancy was assured rulers continued to emphasise their direct lineage from the martyr of Karbela. Zahra Eqbal takes up this question:

"If one is able to rely upon the narrative in the famous *Abu Muslem-Nameh*, and there is no reason to reject it except to say that the writer or narrator, according to the dictates of the art of story-telling, has somewhat exaggerated his account, there was an immediate reaction to the events at Kerbela among the Muslims, especially the Shi'as, and those among the Sunnis who supported the Family of the Prophet. Parties arose to avenge the martyr. The whole period of the rule of the Umayyads was filled with disturbances and rebellions, and according to *Abu Muslem-Nameh*, seventy-one leaders rebelled in turn against the Umayyads before the seventy-second, the *Khurasani* leader *Abu Muslem*, was finally victorious against them.

Probably every one of the rebels had his own particular political, social or religious objectives, but the cry to avenge the grandson of the Prophet was one which gained the widest support. It was used with much zeal and effect to encourage the people to join in rebellion. Throughout the text *Abu Muslem*'s aim is shown to be revenge for the death of the Lord of Martyrs(Hussein)and in some manuscripts(e, g., Mss.No.843 Suppl. Pers in the Bibliotheque National, Paris) it is explained the *Abu Muslem* himself and some of his companions recited eulogies about Imam Hussein on the battlefield or while stirring up the people to rebel against the Umayyads. In this manuscript,

73 Beiza'i op. cit., p.61.

74 Ibid.

examples in both verse and prose of kind of propaganda and the style of speech employed by the eulogizers appear in several places".⁷⁵

In the fifth⁷⁶ and six⁷⁷ centuries A.H. in spite of, the wide dominance of Arabic and Turkish over Persian literature, leading poets and writers as *Omar Khayam*, *Nasir Khusru* , *Mohammed Ghazali*, *Muizzi* , *Nizami*, *Anwari*, *Khakani*, *Nasir Al Din Tossi*(Tusi), *Farid Al Din Attar*, the composer of the Conference of the Birds(*Mantik-ut-Tayr*), which is in dialogue form and *Molavi* continued to write in Persian.

It is the sixth century that saw the appearance of religious mysticism in Persian poems, by way of relief. As a result of this the closed relation between court and poets disappeared. The new subject matter appealed to the mass of the people. In this way poetry later became a medium for religious publicity in the form of Managheb Kahn(Recitation on the Virtues of Man), namely public recitation to the masses on his holiness Ali and the other Shiite Imam.

In the beginning of the seventh century Persia was overrun by a destructive and savage invasion by *Mongols* (A.H.616-619/ A.D.1237-1240). Major parts of the country were fired as a result of this wild behaviour and a number of places renowned as scientific and literary centers, including national treasures, were totally destroyed. Yet what this attack was not able to subdue was the inbred liking of people for literature and science. In the course of the invasions of the *Mongols* and later *Timur*, verse and prose flourished because the arbitrary political authority of the Caliph was destroyed and *Baghdad* lost its

75 Eqbal , (Namdar) Zahra "Elegy in the Qajar Period" (article No:15) Taziyeh/ Ritual and Drama in Iran ed Chelkowski New York 1979. p.195.

76 Fifth century A.H. or 11th of A.D. had belonged to the Ghaznavids.

77 Sixth century A.H. or 12th of A.D. had belonged to Saljuqs.

great literary, religious and scientific centrality. Therefore the close direct connection between Persia and other Islamic nations, who were generally Arab speaking, ceased and ultimately Arabic was utilized only when it became necessary or for prepared and specific religious discussion. So the compilation of science and literature in all branches became established in Persian. For instance Javame Al Hekayat (A collection of stories) by *Mohammed Ufi* or Tabaghate Naseri by *Saraj Al Din Josjani*, which was compiled in A.H.658 (A.D.1250) and is a description of the general history of Persia till the compiler's time, looking back over the *Mongol* tragical events, are both in Persian.

Mehdi Gharavi believes that "despite all the more horrific features of *Mongol* rule, Iranian miniatures reached their peak in this epoch because the Mongols by the end of their rule had found a commitment to literature and the arts".⁷⁸

Ala-u-Din Juwayni in A.H.681(A.D.1273) composed his book called Tarikh-e Jahangush or The history of the World Conqueror, which set out the perceptions of the writer during the course of the *Mongol* invasion; " This history treats of the origin of the Mongols and the conquests of *Changiz Khan* of the *Khwarzm Shahs*, and of *Hulagu's* campaign against the Assassins, in which the author took part."⁷⁹

The Persian verse, during the course of the *Mongol* rule, started with Molavi and Sádi who were born in Iran before the invasion of *Mongol* and were educated out of reach of them.

⁷⁸ Quoted Gharavi , Mehdi Art and People (Honar va Mardom) No189-190., 1973 p.14.

⁷⁹ See Sykes op. cit., p.145.

Jalal-u-Din Rumi (Molavi) one of the great mystical⁸⁰ writers was greatly accomplished in verse and prose. In delightful style he offers his profound thoughts on the beauty of imagery. It is said that *Molavi* disliked ornate speeches. He believed : "the import of speech will be forgotten when it is ornamented." His great work Mathnavi has exercised more influence on thought in Iran and Turkey than other written in Persian tongue, and is even spoken of as " the Koran in the Persian language."⁸¹ The collection of lyric poems known as The Divan of Shams-i Tabrisi is another of his famous works in which stories exist which have been recognized as dramatic, for example Mansour Hallaj.⁸²

Sádi (1194-1291?) is the other favourite poet in the Persia of this era, who composed works of great charm in verse and prose. His works are a recital of moral stories loaded with paradigms of advice and sermon such as The Rose Garden or Golistan. Sykes remarks:

"The first named, which students of Persian generally attempt when beginning to learn the language, although by reason of its terse epigrammatic form it is by no means an easy text-book , is more read and better known by all classes in Persia than any other work except Koran. In its pages we sit behind the curtain with the poet and join him in all his adventures, laughing with him at his astuteness , and realizing how far removed Eastern ethics are from those we profess. As an example of this we may

80 Among the most famous poets of Persia were the mystics of Sufis, "Wearers of Wool", as they are termed, and this spirit of mysticism has permeated Persian literature and Persian mind to a remarkable extent. Its origin is hard to trace. Possibly it is a modern form of ancient philosophies, more especially of Neo-Platonism and Manicheanism. Others hold that it is a reaction of Aryanism against the formalism of the Moslem religion, and, again the philosophy of India has been looked on as its fountain-head. Sykes op. cit., p.146.

81 See Sykes op. cit., vol 2, p.147.

82 See Arberry, A.J Classical Persian Literature (Section Nine Rumi) George Allen and Unwin London., 1958. pp.214-241.

Brown, E.G Has referred Western readers on Sufis to a listed Bibliography in his book called Literary History of Persia Vol 01 P. 444.

refer to the very first story, which points the moral that "an expedient lie is better than a mischievous truth"; and again a soldier who deserted in battle is defended because his pay was in arrears. Such were the ethics Sádi preached, and such they remain in Persia to-day; if we ignore this fact we fail to grasp the Persian point of view".

Brown says of Sádi: "His writings are a microcosm of the East, alike in its best and most ignoble aspects".⁸³

The striking feature of this period was the serious criticism by writers of the immoral behaviour of the ruling classes and the Mongol governors.

"Before the Mongols came to Persia, particularly in the sixth century, the domination of Turkan over Persia, had been characterised by social depravity and outrages which were criticised by poets who were displeased by these. In the course of the Mongol rule, in which more outrages appeared, criticism became intensified".⁸⁴

So along with *Sádi*, *Uhadi* and *Hafiz*, who wrote in this manner, there is *Obaid Zakani Qazvini* (Ubid-i Zakani) whose celebrated books contain trenchant criticism of the *Mongols'* behaviour, expressed in sweet and witty literary language⁸⁵. Beizai, in the continuation of his research on the drama in Iran, points out that in the book of *Zakani* a number of story tellers were introduced⁸⁶.

83 See Sykes op. cit., vol 2, pp.149-150.

84 Safa op. cit., p.47.

85 A. J Arberry writes:" A striking new development of this epoch, no doubt a reaction against the demoralizing sequence of rising and falling empires was the emergence of satire and parody, as in the writings of Ubid-i Zakani and Bushaq. op. cit., p.28.

86 See Beizai op. cit., p.67.

Shamsu-din Mohammed, known by his title of *Hafiz* (this title implies that its bearer knows the Koran by heart) was born at the beginning of the 14th century. The last year of his life chanced to be the beginning of the *Tamerlan* dynasty. He created a unique method of poetical style by a combination of Sufi thinking with the subject of love. His lyrical poems display the height of thought and magnanimity of the Iranian races to the highest degree. The chief work of Hafiz is the Divan (or collection) of Odes.

The last great classical poet of Persia, who flourished in the fifteenth century, was Jami. His work, like those of *Jalal al Din* deal chiefly with moral philosophy and mysticism. Yusuf-u- Zulay Kha is his most celebrated work. "The story running through this poem is that, *Zulaykha*, Potiphar's wife after tempting *Joseph* in vain, became blind from weeping, and *Joseph*, finding her in this state, prayed that her sight and beauty might be restored and finally married her."⁸⁷ This story has been utilized by many dramatists as a motif for their plays, most of these in styles close to European models.

The Arts and Literature in Iran since the tenth century A.H.(A.D. 16th) found a new feature, particularly after the rise of the Safavid dynasty (A.D.1502-1796) who were Shiite. They traced their descent from the seventh Shi'ite *Imam Mosa Kazim (A.S)*. This dynasty from the beginning of its establishment strictly promoted the Shiite faith in Iran, in the course of which they were extremely energetic. In consequence, political, military, scientific and literary capabilities were eclipsed by this attitude. Eventually ecclesiastical concerns became dominant. Obviously this procedure affected poets and writers, especially elegists, or those poets who devoted their talent to the service of religion, were those who thrived.

87 See Sykes op. cit., vol 2 p.152.

"The author of the Tarikh-i-Alam-Ara-yi Abbasi in his account of the chief poets of *Shah Tahmasp*'s reign states that though in earlier life that king enjoyed and cultivated the society of poets in his later years his increasing austerity and deference to the views of the theologians led him to regard them with disfavour as latitudinarians (*wasi'u'l-mashrab*), so that when *Mohtasham* (Muhtasham of Kashan died 996A.H./A.D.1588), hoping for a suitable reward, sent him two eloquent panegyrics, one in his praise and the other in praise of the princess *Pari Khan-Khanum*, he received nothing, the Shah remarking that poetry written in praise of kings and princes was sure to consist largely of lies and exaggerations, according to the well-known Arabic saying, 'The best poetry is that which contains most falsehoods', but that, since it was impossible to exaggerate the virtues of the Prophet and the Imams, the poet could safely exert his talents to the full, and in addition would have the satisfaction of looking for a heavenly instead of an earthly reward. Thereupon Muhtasham composed his celebrated Haft-Band , or poem of seven-verse strophes, in praise of the Imams, and this time was duly and amply rewarded, whereupon many other poets followed his example."⁸⁸

Zahra Eqbal sees the composition of Muhtasham's poem as the culmination of a long process: "There is no doubt that with *Mawlana Muhtasham* of Kashan and his twelve-stanza elegy (*Tarkib-Band*) the art of elegy⁸⁹ reached its highest point up to the Safavid Period"⁹⁰.

88 Brown, Edward op. cit., vol four, pp.172-173.

89 Zahra, Eqbal prior to this in her article remarks: "In the Islamic period too, in the most ancient poetry that has come down to us, we find examples of elegy. Among the poems of Rudaki there are several verses elegizing Muradi and verses in memory of Shahid Balkhi. In the poetry of Farrukhi there is a very famous and moving ode to the memory of Sultan Mahmud. We see elegies in the collected work of Masud Sâd for his son Saleh who died while Sâd was still in prison, and also for the famous poet Sayyid Hassan of Ghazneh. Examples of this type of elegy are found in the work of most poets, even in versified romances by Nezami like Lyli va Majnon, Khsrow va Shrin and the Eskandarnamêh. Elegies may also be found in the poetry of Kisai of Marv, Sayyid Hassan of Ghaznah(in memory of the Seljuq king Mas'ud), Khaqani(many elegies honoring Imam Muhammad ibn Yahya of Nishapur and his son Rashid al din), Khamlud din Ismail(on the death of his son), Amir Mu'ezzi(an elegy on Khwayah Nezamul mulk) Sâdi(in memory of the caliph Mustasem and others) and Hafiz(on the death of his son).

Here are the fourth, fifth and sixth strophes (of twelve), translated by Edward Brown:

"When they summoned mankind to the table of sorrow,
they first issued the summons to the hierarchy of Prophets.

When it came to the turn of the saints, Heaven trembled at
the blow which they smote on the head of the Lion of God.⁹¹

Then they kindled a fire from sparks of diamond-dust and
cast it on Hassan⁹² the chosen one.

Then they tore up from Madina and pitched at Karbala those
pavilions to which even the angels were denied entrance.

Many tall palm-trees from the grove of the 'Family of the
Cloak'⁹³ did the people of Kufa fell in that plain with the axe of
malice.

Many a blow whereby the heart of Mustafa(Muhammad)was
rent did they inflict on the thirsty throat of Mortada Ali's
successor,

While his women, with collars torn and hair unloosed,
raised their laments to the Sanctuary of the Divine Majesty,

And the Trusted Spirit (Gabriel) laid his head in shame on
his knees, and the eye of the sun was darkened at the sight.

When the blood of his thirsty throat fell on the ground,
turmoil arose from the earth to the summit of God's high throne.

Eqbal Zahra "Elegy in the Qajar period" op. cit., PP. 194-195.

90 Eqbal Zahra op. cit., p.198.

91 Ali ibn Abi Talib The Prophet's cousin and son-in-law and the first of twelve Imams

92 Ali's eldest son, the second Imam said to have been poisoned at the instigation of Muawiya.

93 The prophet, his daughter Fatima and her husband Ali and their sons Hassan and Hussein once sheltered under one cloak, whence these five most holy beings are often collectively called by this title.

The Temple of Faith came nigh to ruin through the many fractures inflicted on the Pillars of Religion.

They cast to the ground his tall palm-tree even as the thorn-bush; a deluge arose from the dust of the earth to heaven.

The breeze carried that dust to the Prophet's Tomb: dust arose from Madina to the seventh Heaven.

When tidings of this reached Jesus dwelling in the heavenly sphere, he forthwith plunged his garments in indigo (the colour of mourning in Persia) in the vat of heaven.

Heaven was filled with murmuring when the turn to cry out passed from the Prophets to the presence of the Trusted Spirit.

Mistaken imagination fancied that this dust (Sorrow and vexation) had (even) reached the skirts of the Creator's glory, for although the Essence of the All-glorious is exempt from vexation.

He dwells in the heart, and no heart remains unvexed.

I am afraid that when they record the punishment of his murderer, they may forthwith strike the pen through the book of Mercy.

I am afraid that the intercessors on the Resurrection Day may be ashamed by reason of this sin, to speak of the sins of mankind.

When the people of the House shall lay hands on the People of Tyranny, the hand of God's reproach shall come forth from its sleeve.

Alas for the moment when the House of 'Ali, with blood dripping from their winding-sheets, shall raise their standards from the dust like a flame of fire!

Alas for that time when the youths of that Holy House shall dash together their crimson shrouds on the Resurrection plain!

That company, whose ranks were broken by the strife of Karbala; at the Resurrection in serried ranks will break the ranks of the uprisen.

What hopes from the Lord of Sanctuary(God or His Prophet) can those worthless ones entertain who wounded with their swords the quarry (no game or wild animal or bird may be slain within a certain radius of Mecca) of the Sanctuary?

Then(finally)They raise on a spear-point that Head(the head of Imam Husayn) from whose locks Gabriel washes the dust with the water of Salsabil(one of the river of Paradise).⁹⁴

Kamshad in the light of literary happening after the fall of Safavid remark:

"After the fall of the Safavid during the reign of *Nadir* Shah, the *Afshar*, and the short-lived dynasty of *Zand*, no major improvement was made, and writers generally trod the same path as their Safavid predecessors".⁹⁵

We will now introduce some of the well known poets, accompanied by their poems, who followed *Mohtasham*'s example during the course of *Qajare* period.⁹⁶ But it should be pointed out that it is only possible here to touch

94 Brown, E.G op. cit., vol 4, pp.175-7.

95 Quoted Kamshad op. cit., p.7.

96 Zahra Eqbal has found Persian religious poetry (or sectarian) in following kinds:

a; Didactic Poetry: The purpose of the poet here is to express the principles of his beliefs and to encourage and persuade others to accept his religion or sect.

b; Poetry of Maxim and Counsel: This is designed to encourage people to do good works and to restrain them from molesting others, and from evil and sin.

c; Panegyric and Eulogistic Poetry: This type contains praise of the saints of the religion or sect, the description of their compassionate natures their elevated status near God, and the recounting of their brave and generous deeds.

d; The Religious (or Sectarian) Epic: Epics relate stories in which the heroes are great personalities of the religion or sect. The hero is usually the Lord of the Pious, the Commander of the Faithful, Ali the son of Abu Talib; or Hamzeh, the Prince of Martyrs...

Epics have also been composed in honour of other important religious figures, such as the descendants of the Imam and the grandchildren of Holy Prophet.

slightly on some of the vast literary output. I have had to content myself with a few specimens of the main type which manifest the threnody or elegiac form and style of *Mohtasham* and his imitators and, also those who tried to liberate themselves from Mohtasham's domination. This process which diverted the greater part of Safavid energies into the religious aspects- caused the emigration of a large number of poets and novelists to the Turkish and Indian courts. Later when they came back to their native land, each of them brought a new style and influences into the Persian literature. It should be also pointed out that story telling was also pressed into the service of religion and this became wide-spread. In coffee houses story-tellers stood upon a raised platform or a pulpit, holding a stick, and recounted the history of the house of the prophet Mohammed⁹⁷. If we accept the fact that this form of story-telling could be an important precursor of the form of religious drama in Iran, it is worth looking at it further. Naghali, or Story-telling, during the course of the Safavids, in the form of *Hamleh Khani*⁹⁸, *Pardeh-Dari* (commentary on a depicted scene) and *Rowseh Khani* (gathering for the commemoration of the martyrs of Karbela), evolved. *Pardeh*

e; Poetry of Martyrdom: This is devoted to the martyrdom of the saints, especially that of Imam Hussein, the Lord of Martyrs, and his chaste companion, and to the description of the events at Karbela.

f; Elegy: Elegies also, are written about the martyrdom and the sufferings of religious and sectarian figures. The distinction between these and the poetry of martyrdom is that less attention is paid to the details of the historical events; rather, the poet assumes that the reader is already familiar with the circumstances. He therefore emphasizes some of the sadder and more heart-rending aspects of the tragedy and inaugurates lamentations for the martyrs.
Eqbal op. cit., p.194.

97 See also Jamil Ahmed's article op. cit.

98 Hamleh Khani consisted of the narration of the events from the book of Hidary Attack, by Mirza Mohammed Rafia Bazzel (Died 1124 A.H.) He was one of the poets who emigrated to India. This book, because of the death of the writer, remained uncompleted, but in 1137 was finished by Abu-talib-e Mir Fenderski. The book described the life of the prophet and His holiness Ali, their life and wars. The book terminates with the assault on Ali and his death.

Khani (or Pardeh-Dari) centers on a tableau in which some scene of the events of Karbela is depicted or some other aspect related to the life of the family of the prophet Mohammed has been drawn on it. This tableau is hung on a wall and a story teller, standing by this, expounds on the pictured scene before an audience of those who are enthusiastic to listen and follow the consequences of the story. The majority of audience are well aware of the story which is offered to them.

Mohammed Jafar Mahjub writes:

"During the course of the Safavid Dynasty two brothers, called *Khalil* and *Jalil*, established a kind of game which was known as "Eloquence"(*Sokhanvary*) and was played thus: In coffee houses or *Tekeyeh*, two Dervishes (or some-times ordinary people) gathered in a place. Each of these individuals started to eulogise the saints of the Shi'ite faith while rejecting the Sunny sect. So in a solemn gathering a meeting of poets was established. This sort of event was held in the evening of *Ramadan* or in the day after *Ashora* and the month of *Safar*(the second month of Mohammedan year) and usually took from the beginning of night until the early hours of the morning of the next day."⁹⁹

It should be remembered that alongside the religious tradition of narration , the secular story-telling or reciting the Shahnameh, continued. Other elegists devoted their hands to the family of the prophet during the course of *Qajar* period. They recounted the story of martyrdom, fighting and death with beautiful allusions and skill, forsaking all other forms of literary expression.

1. Haj Sulaiman Sabahi Bidghuli of Kashan: The first great Qajar poet (Died in 1218 A.H. A.D.1803-4). He composed a poem in fourteen stanzas

⁹⁹ Biezai op. cit., p.75.

See also Mahjub, M Sokhan Magazine No9, 1958. serial No 6-7-8.

apparently in honour of the fourteen pure ones. The first stanza of begins with a beautiful allusion to the subject matter, showing that this is the story of martyrdom, fighting, and death.

At eventide, by the edge of the horizon fell
The sun like a severed head in an upset bowl;

Heaven has thrown down the golden helmet[of the sun]
And dragged the hem of the blue tunic of twilight in blood.

2. Mirza Mohammed Shafi ibn Mohammed Ismail of Shiraz, known as Vesal-e Shirazi, known as the Little Mirza with the pen name of Vesal (d.1262 A.H./ A.D. 1845) was a poet, calligrapher, and musician of the Qajar period.

For whom does the world put on black mourning?
And for whom has the dawn torn its collar open[in sorrow]?
This stream of tears of blood which is flowing from
the eyes of the people,
Is for whose misfortune and for whose misadventure?

3. Qa'ani:Mirza Habib Allah of Shiraz (d. 1270A.H./A.D. 1853):

What rains down? Blood! Who? The Eye! How? Day and night!
Why?
From grief! What Grief? The Grief of the Monarch of Karbala!
What was his name? Husayn! Of whose race? Ali's.

Who was his mother? Fatima! Who was his grandsire? Mustafa!
How was it with him? He fell a martyr! Where? In The
Plain of Mariya!
When? on the tenth of Muharram! Secretly? No, in public!
Was he slain by night? No, by day! At what time? At noontide!
Was his head severed from the throat? No, from the
nape of the neck!
Was he slain unthrusting? No! Did none give him to drink? They
did!
Who? Shemr! from what source? from the source of Death!
Was he an innocent martyr? Yes ! Had he committed any fault?
No!

What was his work? Guidance! Who was his friend?
God!¹⁰⁰....

4. Yaghma: Mirza Abul Hasan of Jandaq (d. 1276A.H./ A.D.1859) was famous writer of prose and poetry of the thirteenth Islamic (19th Christian): We bring some of his dirges for breast-beating part from other form of his elegies:

My Akbar returns from the Euphrates with parched lips;
My young Akbar!
Flow forth, O fountain of my moist eyes;
My young Akbar!
While the turquoise vat[of heaven] has dyed the robe
of thy life with red blood,
The world has dyed my veil black with the indigo of mourning;
My young Akbar!

Yaghma was amongst those who did not try to imitate Muhtasham and was independent and innovative in his elegies.

5. Soroush: Mirza Mohammed Ali Khan, "the sun of Poets" (d.1285 A.H./A.D.1868):

In my hand is a pen dipped in blood
So that I might write a book of Tragedy;
But I fear that my pen will burst into flame,
And thus my book has remained unwritten.
I fear that my pen will turn to fire,
Or that the page will burn from the heat of my sighs.
When God revealed the fate of that faithful king
To Abraham and Adam,
Adam forgot his sorrow for his Abel,
And Abraham forgot his Ishmael.

6. Saburi of Kashan: Haj Mirza Mohammed Kazim; "the king of the Poets of the shrine of Imam Reza" (d.1322 A.H./A.D.1904):

100 Brown, E (Vol four) op. cit., p .180.

The bells of an exceedingly pained and sorrowful caravan can be heard,
 Like the burning sigh which comes from the saddened heart.
 I think it is a caravan strayed from its homeland,
 For with the sound of camel bells come heart-melting cries.
 If this be the caravan of Hussein, the descendant of the prophet,
 Why does death come out to meet him at every stage?
 Behold, master of the tents, set up the pavilion of honour;
 For the Chaste One of God, Zainab, is approaching from a long journey.

7. Jaihun of Yazd; "The most Eloquent of Speakers" the late Agha Muhammad Yazdi, whose pen name was Jaihun, died in 1318A.H./A.D.1900-1901. He and his brother Saihun were well-known poets during the course of the reign of Nasir al din Shah.

Once again, emotion-arousing moon of Muharram, you have appeared,
 And you have struck the spark of Ashura in my heart...

You have returned, and like last year,
 You have been lancing my wounded heart with sorrow again and again,
 You are none other than that which rushed from good to evil,
 And then plundered the descendant of the best of mankind.
 You are none other than that which instead of a handful of water,
 Shot an arrow into the throat of wretched Asghar.

8. Oman of Samon has composed an elegy in distichs which appears to be in imitation of Soroush of Isfahan. These couplets from that elegy are very famous:

His sister, beating her breast and head,
 Went off to seize the reins of her brother's horse.
 The flood of her tears closed the road to the king,
 The heat of her sighs frightened the king,
 He saw that her black hair was that of a woman,
 with one hand on the reins and the other stretched toward heaven.

Don't say "Woman"; she is the creator of men in this world,
Don't say "Woman"; rather the daughter of glory and
the sister of dignity.
Don't say "Woman"; people prostrate themselves at her threshold.
Don't say "Woman"; rather the Hand of God in the sleeve.

9. Iraj Mirza, Jalaul-Mamalik, probably was the last poet of the Qajar period who wrote elegies.(d.1304 A.H./A.D.1926). He cannot really be counted among the elegists, since it is love poetry and the social criticism of his *Arefnameh* with its simple rhetorical style which has given him considerable fame. Nonetheless, two elegies can be found in his Divan. These, like his other poems, are simple. fluent, and possess new and pleasing themes:

The women wandered amid the burning tents,
Like the reflections of stars on water,
The small children, from around the tents,
Ran in all directions, like fiery sparks from the heart.
Other than their lacerated livers which could not be reached by
the vicious enemy,
Nothing remained to them of their torn possessions.
Fingers were cut off for the sake of rings;
Earlobes were torn for their earrings.
The grandson of that king whose exalted name is called,
At morning, noon, and night from the minarets,
Has fallen in the blood and dust, and they trample his body,
With their horses' hoofs which strike screams from rocks.

10. Mirza Yahya Mudarres of Isfahan (Dastgerdi) has also left us an elegy in stanzas on the martyrs of Karbela:

O Sufferer of sorrow, the world loves thee;
Old and young mourn thee with broken hearts.
The dust of thy threshold is too the place of prayer of mankind,
And Kerbela is the prayer ground of angels.
The robe of heaven is still red from glow of twilight,
For the death of red-robed Akbar.
When Hussein saw that newly married Qasem is drowned in
blood,

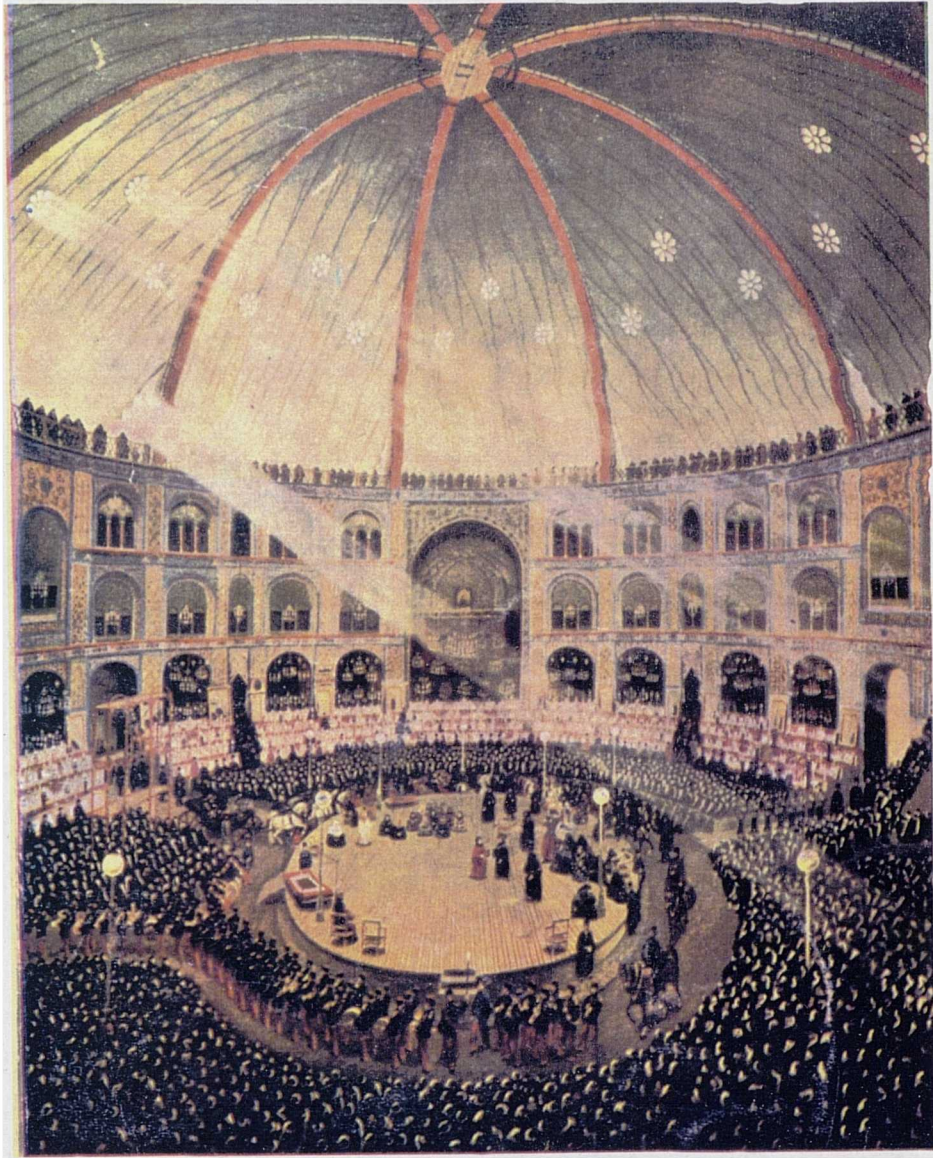
His soul was anguished.¹⁰¹

What has been described, so far, could be reckoned as an examination of the transition or evolution of the Passion play in Iran which in its shaping, we saw, moved far away from the rich literature of verse and prose, yet still preserved the spiritual feelings and aspirations of the activists who were truly interested in it. Perhaps, almost, it could be held that passion play in genre, is a blending of all the traditions which proceeded its appearance.



101 All this specimens (except item or entry No three that is from the translation of Brown) have been extracted from the Eqbal's article op. cit., pp. 196-207.

CHAPTER FOUR



Tekiyeh Dowlat by Kamal al Mulk.

Chapter Four

Historical Development of The Taziyeh

a; From Procession to dramatisation.

Since little exists in mature records from which we are deduce firm evidence for the stages of development that the Taziyeh experienced we have to draw, in its earliest period, on the evidence of foreign travellers' accounts of the sights seen on their journeys. In the later periods of the nineteenth century when the Taziyeh is sufficiently formed and established as a *feature of Iranian life* and religious observance, there is sufficient mature evidence to carry on this enquiry.

When the Taziyeh was well-established, and became a tradition, travellers and foreign visitors found the passion play of such significant importance as to include it in their reports or travelogues. These travelogues relate to the Safavian, Zandian¹ and Kajar² dynasties and thereafter. While taking into consideration that these are the opinions of individuals, in which little attention has been paid towards the origin and the sources of Taziyeh, we must nevertheless accept their eyewitness accounts as evidence of the evolution of Passion Plays in Iran. This becomes very important in the light of the fact that Iranians have until recently never developed any historiography of their own ³.

¹ Zandian related to Karim Khan Zand A.D.1783-1822.

² Kajar the Turkoman dynasty A.D.1779-1925.

³ Ernst E. Herzfeld in his book Archaeological History of Iran adds: They own a strong tendency towards abstract and metaphysical philosophy, which tackles great preambles, but disregards and discards all empiricism, as shown by all their religious and

The Spanish priest Antonio de Gouvea, who came to Persia during the reign of Shah Abbas, wrote in 1011 A.H. /A.D.1602-1603:

"In front of the mourning processions camels are seen draped in green cloth upon which women and children are riding. The heads and faces of the women and children are bruised and wounded as though by arrows and they appear to be weeping and wailing. Then a company of armed men passed shooting their guns into the air [this observation demonstrates the mixture of drama and life]. After them, came coffins followed by the governor of the city (Allahverdi Khan) and other notables of the government. All entered the great mosque of Shiraz. There a mullah mounted the pulpit and recited eulogies, and all wept...⁴

Pietro della Valle, an Italian traveller who was in Isfahan for a few years, wrote at some length about the ceremonies he observed in this city in 1027A.H./A.D.1618.

"With the arrival of the tenth of Muharram, the day of the martyrdom of Hussein, large processions appear from all directions and people from all sections of Isfahan carrying flags and standards. A variety of weapons and many turbans on the horses accompany the processions. In addition to this there are several camels accompanying them upon which boxes are transported. In each of these there are four children representing the captured children of the martyr Hussein. Besides these, every procession carries biers wrapped with black velvet and upon which a single turban, usually green, and a sword are placed. In the same fashion a variety of weapons and other articles is placed upon the numerous trays carried by some of the people on their heads. They jump about to the music of cymbals and flutes, and whirl about. In

philosophical systems. Historical facts, in the same way, are not considered as important, and every historical tradition is immediately transformed into legend. Herzfeld Ernst E. Archaeological History of Iran Oxford University Press, 1934., p.18.

⁴ Quoted in Baktash, M. "Taziyeh and Its Philosophy" (article No:8) Taziyeh/ Ritual and Drama in Iran ed, Chelkowski, New York, 1979. p.105.

this way the trays too spin around. creating a marvellous scene.
Around the tray- bearers there are men carrying clubs...⁵

Thomas Herbert, in 1628 describes the procession as no more than an effigy-ceremony, whereby the image of those who caused Husain's death were burnt.

"Nine days they wander up and down, all while shaving neither head nor beard nor seeming joyful, but increasingly beating their breast; some tear their garments, and crying out Hussan, Hussan(Husain, Husain) in their melancholy note, so long, so fiercely, that many can neither howl longer, nor for a month's space recover their voices. The dervishes and other santouns or enthusiasts, being in the crowd express their zeal by turning round so long together and with such swiftness as will hardly be credited, which by custom is made inoffensive... The tenth day they find an imaginary Hussan, whom they echo forth in stentorian clamours, till they bring him to his grave; where they let him sleep quietly till the next year's zeal fetch him out and force him again to accompany their devotion"⁶.

The author Adam Olearius, who had visited Ardabil (sacred city of the Safavian) of the end of the reign of the Safavian dynasty, in Muharram of the 1047 A.H. or May/June 1637, recorded his observation in detail. He gives a description of the mourning wails, lamentations and self-mutilations culminating on the Ashura or *Ruz-i-Qatl*⁷, but he makes no mention of any dramatic representations, which leads to the conclusion that none existed at that time.

⁵ See note Four.

⁶ Asgar, Jalal A Historical Study of the Origins of The Persian Passion Play A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School University of South California, 1963., p.170.
See also Thomas Herbert, Travels in Persia, ed . Sir William Foster (London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1928)., pp.267-268.

⁷ Brown, E.G op. cit., Vol Four, pp.28 & 29.

Jalal Asgar quoting Olearius adds:

"The people of the city were in mourning for the death of Husain, and that they carried three coffins on a camel " to represent those of Holy (Ali), and his two sons , Hassan and Hossain." Apparently, instead of having the processions go through the city, the ceremonies and Devotions were performed in a House built for the purpose , without the city".⁸

Jean-Batiste Tavernier, the French traveler, visited the Far East six times between 1632-1668. Some of his expeditions took in visits to Iran, and in the seventh chapter of his fourth travelogue he elaborates on, and writes copiously about, Iranian customs of religion and mourning.⁹

And Auliya Chelebi, the Ottoman traveller, who came to Tabriz during the reign of Shah Safi in 1050 A.H./ A.D.1640 writes:

"On the tenth [of Muharram] each year the nobles and notables and all the people of the city, great and little, erect tents and mourn the martyrs of Kerbela on the polo ground of Tabriz. In this period, water is provided to the people in crystal cups, and some of the nobles and important personages hang flasks around their necks and give water to the people for the sake of Imam Hussein. The Khan or *Beglerbegi* of Tabriz is seated in his embroidered tent with a group of the notables and nobles of Tabriz in attendance, and they read a *Maqal* about Imam Hussein. Many devotees of Hussein are seated, listening attentively with humility and submissiveness. When the reader of the book reaches the part describing the manner in which the accursed Shemr killed the oppressed Imam Hussein, at that very moment, they bring out to the field from the pavilion of the Martyrs of Ashura mock representations of the bodies of the dead children of Imam. Upon

⁸ Jalal Asgar op. cit., pp.170-171.

See also Adam Olareus, The Voyages and Travels of Ambassador Sent by Frederick Duke of Holstein to the Great Duke of Muscovy and of Persia, trans. John Davies (London: Thomas Dring and John Starkey, 1662), p.217.

⁹ See Tavernier The Six Voyages trans.J. Phillis (London:R.L. and M.p., 1678).

seeing this spectacle shouts and screams and wailings of "Alas Hussein" mount from the people to the heavens and all the spectators weep and wail. Hundreds of Hussein's devotees beat and wound their heads, faces, and bodies with swords and knives. For the love of Imam Hussein they make their blood flow. The green grassy field becomes bloodied and looks like a field of poppies. Then the mock dead are carried from the field and the reading of the Maqal of Imam Hussein is completed".¹⁰

Jalal Asgar remarks:

"The earliest writings pertaining to the Muharram ceremonies showing some indication of an attempt to dramatize them was supplied by Cornelius Le Bruyn in A.D.1704. The dramatic element in Le Bruyn's description was that of disguise . He observed that Husain was represented by an image "very Hollow", and put into motion by a person inclosed within it, and whose legs are plainly to be seen."

Asgar adds to Bruyn's account:

"Until A.D.1704, all the references to Husain's image were symbolic, represented by an immovable object. But Le Bruyn saw that the image was in motion and a person was actually disguised as Husain. Thus, the dramatic element of the first actor was supplemented by the element of disguise. From this time on, the more elaborated development was inevitable and the outcome was not surprising."¹¹

Chelkowski uses Dutchman, Cornelius le Bruyn's, account as the last important account of the Muharram celebration in Safavid times. In this he recognises a further growth of pageantry and writes:

¹⁰ Baktash op. cit., p.106.

¹¹ Asgar , Jalal A Historical Study of the Origins of The Persian Passion Plays , A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School, University of Southern California, 1963., pp.228-229.
See also Cornelius Le Bruyn, Travels into Muscovy, Persia and Part of the East-Indias (London: A.Bettesworth and Co., 1737)., pp.215-216.

"Le Brun (sic) told of an increased number of participants who, via mimicry and pantomime showed a variety of tragic scenes of the suffering of Hussein and his family during the siege and battle of Kerbela, as well as scenes depicting the captivity of Hussein's women and children after his death. The tableaux, staged on moving and stationary platforms , were well organized and presented in chronological sequence. It is clear from Le Brun's description that the participants took great pains in arranging appropriate costumes, while some of them painted their bodies in red and black to simulate wounds and bruises."¹²

Chelkowski concludes: "These demonstrations, however, did not yet constitute a drama".¹³

Salamons and Van Goch were the first foreigners , in the post Safavid time, to record the Taziyeh -Khavni, as a dramatic performance. However, it seems that Salamons and Van Goch saw what was probably the last stage of the lengthy development of the ritual before it becomes verbal and vocal in the dramatic form. Their description of Muharram rituals appears in their book, Die Heutige Historie und Geographie, oder der Gegenwärtige staat von königreich Persien (Flensburg, Altona, 1739).¹⁴

William Franklin, an Englishman, travelled to Iran in 1786 and recorded the results of his eight-month tour in a travelogue, which he named: Observation made on a tour from Bengal to Persia ¹⁵. This is one of the earliest reports recording details of a Taziyeh performance during the Zandian period in Iran. Franklin comments on the scenery and setting and especially the Taziyeh of The

¹² Chelkowski , Peter "Bibliographical Spectrum " Taziyeh/ Ritual, Drama in Iran, New York , 1979., p.257.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.258.

¹⁵ Translated version into Persian, Iranian Centre for Historical Research Press, 1974., pp.72-73.

Marriage of Kassem¹⁶, one of the earliest forms of Taziyeh, and gives a thorough description of events. This report indicates that by the end of the Zandian period Taziyeh had found its form.

Franklin in his book writes:

"All the various events are represented by the Persians during the first days of Muharrum. Each day some particular action of the story is represented by people selected for the purpose of performing those concerned in it".

He continues:

"Among the most affecting representations is the marriage of young Casim[sic], the son of Hussun[sic], and nephew of Hossein, with his daughter; but this was never consummated, as Casim was killed in a skirmish on the banks of the Euphrates, on the 7th of Muharrum. On this occasion, a boy represents the bride, decorated in her wedding garment, and attended by the females of the family chanting a mourning elegy, in which is related the circumstance of her betrothed husband being cut off by infidels. The parting between her and her husband is also represented, when on his going to the field she takes an affectionate leave of him: and on his quitting her presents him with a burial vest, which she puts round his neck".¹⁷

"By A.D. 1811 when James Moreir saw the Muharram presentations, the processions were much more elaborate and the parades were full of symbols ornamented with precious stones and beautiful cashmerian shawls, etc. James Moreir described both the professional actors and the temporary stage used for the performances."¹⁸ He saw a full dramatic representation of "Hussein's Martyrdom" in Tehran.

¹⁶ We will discuss this Majlis later.

¹⁷ Chelkowski op. cit., p.258.

¹⁸ See Asgar, Jalal op. cit., pp.231-232.

"William Ousley saw it in A.D. 1812 and reported that it was as pompous as the one a year earlier."¹⁹

Colonel Drouvill, on the Taziyeh of Imam Hussein ,who had watched it in the open air in Tehran in 1821, writes:

"A four thousand multitude took part in this play in which the striking scene was the event of the tenth day of Muharram. In this play, one of the courtiers played Imam Hussein's role. It was shown that when he with his company arrived at Kufa and encountered the division of *Ibn-Ziad* who were thousands of soldiers, Imam Hussein refused to accept the allegiance to Yazid and Ibn Ziad began fighting. I was astonished to watch this exciting scene which looked like a real battle, particularly, when I noticed ,in the end of the play none of these thousands' bodies were injured while this *unsystematic* war was in progress²⁰.

Lady Sheil gives us her description on a performance of Taziyeh in a court Tekiyeh in 1849.

"The month of December chanced this year to be one of woe and wailing externally, but really of relaxation and amusement to all classes of Persians. It was the month of Moharrem, which among Sheds is solemnized in commemoration of the slaughter of Imam Hoosein and his family in the desert of Kerbella. The story is affecting. The Persians have converted it into a theatrical representation, somewhat resembling the Mysteries produced on the stage in old times in England and elsewhere".

See also Moreir. James A Second journey Through Persia , Armenia and Asia Minor to Constantinople, Between the Years 1810-1816 (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1818), pp.180-183.

¹⁹ Asgar, Jalal op. cit., p.232.

See also Ousley, Sir William Travels In Various Countries of The East; More particularly Persia (London: Rodwell and Martin, 1819) III, 165-166.

²⁰ Mohebi, Javad (Translator) Voyage en Perse pendant les Annees 1812 et 1813 (Paris 1825) Tehran, Gothenburg Press, 1958., pp.140-141.

Then she brings in a summary of the story of Karbela. Afterwards she adds: "I confess with some shame, that my patience and curiosity were insufficient to carry me through a complete performance of the entire drama; nevertheless I have been to several representations." At any rate she gives us her description on a performance of Taziyeh thus:

"Everything was done to make the scene as real as possible. Hoossein, his family and attendants, were in the costume of the time. They make their appearance, travelling to Cufa, in the desert of Kerbella. Camels, led horses caparisoned, Kejawas are conducted round the platform; trumpets, Kettledrums, resound far and near. Yazeed's army appears, his general makes a speech, Imam Hoossein laments his pathetic fate; he then goes out to fight, and returns, himself and his horse covered with arrows. *The scene proceeds;* they are cut off from the Euphrates; more lamentations over their impending fate, more fighting. The fierce Shimer and his cavaliers, all in mail, come forward, mounted on their war-horses; Shimer makes speeches in character; Imam Hoossein replies with dignity and with grief for the distress of his family. His young sons Ali Akber and Ali Asghar go out to fight, and are brought back dead. Sekkeena and Rookheeya, his little daughters, are slain amid the weeping loud and unfeigned of the audience. The angel Gabriel descends from the skies, attended by his ministering angels, all radiant in spangled wings, and deprecates the hard lot of the prophet's offspring; the king of the Gins, or Ginii, with his army, appears, and follows the angelic example. Moses, Jesus Christ, and Mahammed, revisit the earth and are stricken with the general contagion of grief.

At length Shimer does his work, amidst an universal outburst of sorrow and indignation; and the next day, the tenth, the interment of Imam Hoossein and his family takes places at Kerbella".²¹

Alexander Edmond Chodzko, a scholar, diplomat and the author of books on popular Persian poetry, Persian Grammar and customs, in 1837 collected thirty three of Taziyeh manuscripts which belonged to the period of Fath Ali Shah of the Kajar dynasty. Chodzko translated and published five of these in 1878 in an

²¹ Lady Sheil Life and Manners in Persia 1856 pp.125-130.

anthology called " Theater Persan, choix de Teazies ou drames". (See appendix No:2)

Chodzko relates that when he saw the performance of one of the plays, "Amir Teimur," at the Royal Theater, he asked the producer for the manuscript. The producer, Hussein Ali Khan, would not part with the manuscript, which was part of the Royal Library, but he permitted Chodzko to have it copied. In this fashion, Chodzko managed to obtain copies of thirty three manuscripts, which are now in the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris.²²

Sir Lewis Pelly, representative of the British government in India, translated the manuscript of thirty seven Taziyeh into English, which were printed in London in 1879 under the title of Miracle play of Hasan and Husain. (See appendix No:3) Pelly believed the Taziyeh to be the greatest drama in the world and in his elaborate preface says:

"If the success of drama is to be measured by the effects which it produces upon the people for whom it is composed, or upon the audience before whom it is presented, no play has ever surpassed the tragedy known in the Mussulman world as that of Hasan and Husain".²³

"The translation of Pelly consists of thirty-seven plays which he translated from the Persian oral tradition into ornate Victorian English. A comparison of the titles in the Chodzko collection of some forty years earlier, and the Pelly collection, indicates the topical growth of the drama. Whereas thirty-three plays in the Chodzko collection deal primarily with the Karbela tragedy, the Pelly collection spans the whole cycle from the time when Hussein is destined for martyrdom to the resurrection of mankind when Hussein intercedes on behalf of all those who mourned for him".²⁴

22 Forough, M. op. cit., p.73.

23 Pelly op. cit., preface.

24 Quoted Chelkowski op. cit., p.261.

Count de Gobineau, the French diplomat, who had spent some years in Iran and other middle east countries, gives an elaborate explanation about the Taziyeh and its comparison with classical drama in a book called Les religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asia centrale(Paris,1865,1957), and also writes about the Taziyeh recitation. He translated the Taziyeh of The Marriage of Kassem into French.

In this he opposed the wishes of some Iranian scholars who were not in favour of translations of this fictional Majlis into another language, *in case the event was accepted as true.*

Elsewhere Gobineau describes a Majlis he witnessed which belonged to a type of Taziyeh which is entertainment or *Gusheh* in which there is no direct relation to the events of Karbela. However, he writes:" This is the best which I have seen or read" and gives his description of the performance of the play called "The Christian Daughter" based on a version in 1864.

"For the first time, before the starting of a Taziyeh the platform could not be seen, but was hidden by surrounding posts covered by curtain. When the trumpeters announced the starting of the show the curtain was raised. The scene was the plain of Kerbela, after the event. There was nothing except scattered weapons which showed traces of the war on the plain and the biers of the martyrs, which had been lit by candles.

A touching silence was established by which the sanctity of the martyrs could be comprehended. A convoy of camels with soldiers and musicians(players) accompanied by servants arrived at the scene. A young woman riding her horse is seen at the head of the convoy. She orders them to stop and pitch tents. This young woman was clothed in a European outfit with veil, a wide hat and black boots.

The convoy did not know the significance of the place and started to erect tents whereupon blood erupted from the ground. All were frightened and ceased what they were doing forcing the young woman to rest in an arch way. Christ arrived on the scene and told the story of the Kerbela massacre to the young woman in detail, before leaving.

Then a malicious man, intent on pillaging the site arrived the scene. He played his role very well. When he could not find

anything to take away he started to beat the dead bodies angrily. While railing at them, without considering or understanding the sanctity of the atmosphere of the scene, he took a sword and cut off one of the Imam's hand. Again blood was spurted out. After that the voice of Imam Hussein caused him to be frightened and flee the place. Then all the prophets, their faces covered, arrived the stage and took away the body of Imam Hussein with them.

When the young woman, who had been told the story of Kerbela by Christ, awoke she converted to Islam²⁵.

Many years later Matthew Arnold, the English critic, wrote a criticism of Gobineau's book under the title of "A Persian Passion Play 1871", London²⁶.

S. Benjamin in his book Persia and the Persian on the month of Mourning and procession observance in 1887 writes:

"One becomes aware that the month of mourning has arrived, by the practical cessation of all but the most important labour. Business in the bazaars nearly comes to a stop, and as evening approaches the wild shout of the processions of fanatics may be heard from all parts of the city. The first ten days of Moharrem are especially devoted to the commemoration of the massacre of Hussein and his family; but it is not until the last four or five days of this period that these processions, called *testâh* (must be dasteh = a band of celebrators), become so demonstrative as to prove a disturbing element in the city. In those days a large part of the male population leave the shirt loose in (sic) the neck, and the dasteh parade at all hours of the day, yelling with loud and monotonous cadence, "Ya Hussein, Ya Hussein".²⁷

25. Beizai op. cit., pp149-150. I have had to translate this part from Persian. The original description is in French and can be found in the book called: Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale Paris, Didier et Cie., 1866.

26 Forough, Mehdi "Drama in Iran" Iranshahr first volume, periodical in Iran No:22.(Tehran, Iran: Unesco Press., 1963)

27 Benjamin S.G.W Persia and Persian London : John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1887., pp.378-379.

Benjamin in his book Persia and the Persian has given a detailed account on Taziyeh in Tekiyeh Dowlat and the Tekiyeh itself. Apart from him there are other accounts on the Muharram observance, especially on the processions in Iran that exist even today and have not been superseded by Taziyeh.

When Taziyeh appeared as a form of drama they necessarily created manuscripts for each play. Again these manuscripts attracted the attention of foreign scholars and travellers to collect them and even translate them into their language. Fortunately or unfortunately, this kind of treasure were sold without regard for their value so that today it is not possible to find manuscripts of Taziyeh in its home land so easily as one might abroad. For instance Mahjub, in 1976, collected and republished five majlises of the Chodzko collection in Persian.

De Lorey, has named one of his chapters "Religious Processions and Theatre- The Persian Oberammergau". He in the end of this part, where he is describing the circumstances of the arriving of the characters of the Majlis of The *Wedding of Kassem*, compares the last scene with *Oberammergau*. "The crowd watching this spectacle was deeply affected; they wept passionately, and rent their garments. It was an old Testament *Oberammergau*".²⁸

Wilhelm Litten is a German who collected fifteen manuscripts of Taziyeh plays and published them in facsimile under the title , Das Drama in Persien (Berlin, Lipzig, 1929). The list is in Appendix No:4.

Enrico Cerulli during the course of 1945 to 1950 collected the biggest collection of Taziyeh manuscripts comprising one thousand and fifty plays. This collection under the name of *Elenco Di Drammi Religiosi Persiani* was indexed and is kept in the library of Vatican with the number of 209.

28 De Lorey Queer Thing About Persia (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1907.,) p.306.

A.S.Tritton discussing Shi'ite ritual says: "The most spectacular festival is the mourning for Husain which takes place during the first day of Muharram." He continues: "During the day men parade through the streets beating their backs with chains. At night participants re-recall the events of the fatal day." Then he sets the scene of a particular Taziyeh:

"Closed litters carried by horses or camels represent the women of the party; Hussein's daughter had [sic] just been married so that meats for the wedding feast are carried in the procession."

He also mentioned their position in the procession, but never called this a play or Taziyeh by name, unless we can count an inclusion at the end of his paragraph, when he says: "Another form of the celebration is to have a regular miracle play acted out in the courtyard of a big house." Here it is logical to assume that he means the Taziyeh".²⁹

For those who have witness the Taziyeh first-hand it is obvious that Tritton did not see them himself, but relied on information gleaned from the travelogues of others. The reason for this assertion is that he has juxtaposed elements and episodes from separate major plays and recorded them as one procession.

Peter J Chelkowski writes:

"For about two hundred and fifty years the Muharram procession and the narrative recitation existed side by side, each becoming more complex and at the same time more refined and theatrical. Then, in the middle of the 18th century, they fused. A new dramatic form was born- Taziyeh-khani- or as it is more familiarly called simply (sic) Taziyeh".³⁰

29 Tritton , A.S Islam, Belief and Practices, London, Hutchinson , 1951., p.75.

30 Chelkowski, Peter.J Taziyeh: Indigenous Avant- Garde Theatre Shiraz., 1975., p.8.

To conclude this issue, in summary, we could suggest William L. Hanaway and Mahjub's point regarding the evolution of Taziyeh.

"Two main sources, regarding the origin of Taziyeh, can be discerned. The first consists of the processions, demonstrations, spectacles and rituals commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, his family and his supporters at Kerbela. The second is a variety of literary sources concerned with these martyrdoms and related events. The latter sources are such books as the *Rowzatul Shuhada* (15th century), the *Haft Band of Muhtasham of Kashan* (sixteenth century), and the work of nineteenth century poet such as *Qa'ani* and others".³¹

Mahjub based upon what he believes states:

"Taziyeh until seventeenth Christian century did not exist in Persia whereas according to available documents -it is known that a European witnessed dramatic scenes about the tragedy of Kerbela during the 1780s³². Therefore this great change in which the mourning assemblies and processions of breast -beating were converted into a theatrical presentation must have occurred during the 18th century, and the drama was brought to perfection about the beginning of the nineteenth century."³³

All these events culminated in the appearance of Mobile Taziyeh and the Taziyeh itself.

Mobile Taziyeh is, undoubtedly, the completed form of the act of the procession group during the course of the demonstration for the happening of Ashura. Mobile Taziyeh itself divides into two forms of performances. The former division is a pedestrian group of Taziyeh performers and the latter one is a group

³¹ Hanaway, William L. "Stereotyped Imagery in the Taziyeh" (article No:14) *Taziyeh/ Ritual and Drama in Iran* ed Chelkowski, New York, 1979. p183.

³² Mahjub refers here to the Chevalier Jean Chardin who lived long years in Iran during the height of the Safavid period.

³³ Mahjub op. cit., p.142.

which uses carts or pageants in their performances. The former group show their respect towards the event of Karbela thus: Several groups represent, successively, the happening of the ten days of Muharram. Each group has been prepared to perform a part of the event of Ashura or, in other terms, the events of one day of the ten days before a huge crowd of spectators who have gathered on the margins of a predetermined route in town or cities. When the first group of players approaches the place of the performance they start to perform their part and then they depart to follow the route ahead in order to play their part to another group of spectators. During this interval the second group will take the place and perform their part, which is the events of the second day. This group will do the same job as the first one did. This action will be continued up to the performance of the final part of the story of Karbela by the last group of performers.

The second group of travelling Taziyeh performers use carts or pageants. The pageants are towed from place to place in a town or city and at each place the pageant is stopped when a part of the story of Ashura is performed. Then another pageant follows, so the whole story will be performed in several different districts of a town in sequence.

In the Taziyeh of the Martyrdom of Imam Hussein several pageants and actors are required. In the first pageant the actor who plays the role of Imam Hussein presents the scene of the farewell of Imam with his family. In the next pageant another actor plays the role of Imam. He presents the next scene of this Majlis. This is continued until the last scene, in the last pageant, which is the battle. Sometimes in this pageant the actor who is playing the role of Imam is riding a horse. In fighting, the player of Imam dismounts from his horse and starts fencing with Shemr. In the next pageant the scene of the site of martyrdom is shown while the player of Imam Hussein, with his blood stained shirt on, plays his part. At this moment Shemr in his red outfit arrives the scene and dismounts from his horse.

Then his army turns round the pageant cart and they pretend to be lancing Imam. At all this moments the congregation of spectators yell: "Ya Hussein". Amongst all pageants the pageant of Euphrates is more spectacular. This is decorated by palm leaf and a huge pan full of red coloured water. Usually the actor who plays the role of Abbas stands by the pan and recites his elegy to the children who were standing on the pageant.

Ala edin Rahimi, describing Mobile Taziyeh in Qum, writes.

"At the head of any mobile Taziyeh procession a big tricolour flag is carried while behind it a few coloured flags in small size are carried also. On the track of them a group of drummers with small and big drums walk. Then a big embroidered fabric tableau upon which the name of this group is seen appears. After this a body of men who are the chief of this group walk. An experienced activist hires a few camels from the nearby village of Qom. These camels are decorated by silk rugs, needlework fabric, mirror, saddle and so forth. Sometimes more than ten camels in a row can be seen. On the top of the hump of each camel is put a drum. Drummers are put in outfits similar to the army uniform. They sit on camels and beat the drum rhythmically. After them the first pageant of mobile Taziyeh appears. Pageants present; the camp of Imam Hussein, Yazid's palace and the site of martyrdom. Amongst this group are children who carry drinking water or milk for offering to the masses.³⁴

b; Taziyeh in the Kajar dynasty

The evidence suggests then that the tradition of Taziyeh began a thousand years ago, by the reign of Nasser-din-Shah (the Kajar dynasty, 1264-1313 A.H./

³⁴ Rahhimi , A "The Qom and exciting Taziyeh days" Namayesh (Theatre) monthly review No:22 August 1989 p.10

A.D.1844-1893), the form had evolved from purely religio-historic observance through processions into dramatic reenactment. By this time Taziyeh had reached its zenith, establishing for itself formed spaces for performance and also creating new developments in structure and content.

By the nineteenth century, as a development of the moving procession and the stationary recitation, Taziyeh was moved from the street intersections and squares where it was originally performed, into the courtyards of private houses and bazaars and finally into the most magnificent house for the performance of Taziyeh, in the second half of the nineteenth century (1860).

This now nascent form of the drama was performed in arena theatres called Tekiyeh (Tekiyeh = play house), built on every corner of every city³⁵. These Tekiyeh were usually paid for, and maintained by, the well-to do and upper classes, as a religious and public service and observance.

Here Beizai makes a point, that will be questioned later, regarding Tekiyeh.

He writes:

"But, some of these people who were interested in constructing a place for Taziyeh, because of the opposition of some religious authorities, converted Tekiyehs into Mosques".

He adds:

"At any rate, Taziyeh was able to be performed at any place such as squares, crossroads, graveyards or in temporary Tekiyeh. The structure of this kind of Tekiyeh- a huge tent- had a clear tie with the long period of tent dwelling(nomadism) in this land. Yet when permanent Tekiyeh began to be built the design of traditional

35 The main cities could be introduced as follow:

Abadeh , Arak , Bakhtaran, Busher, Esfahan , Desful, Kashan, Kerman, Mahhad, Mazandaran, Naragheh, Qazvin, Qom, Rasht, Shahpour, Shiraz, Shushtar, Tafresh , Taleghan, Tehran, Zanzan....

Nasir Najmi writers: "in 1906 more than thirty Tekiyeh existed in Tehran". He introduces the most famous Tekiyeh as follows: Sepahsalar, Valid Khan, Haj Mirza Aghasi, Nouroz Khan, Esmaeal Bazaz, Ghor Khaneh, Khonghah, Zambourak Khaneh, Dabagh Khaneh, Seyed Nasradin...

Najmi Old Iran, Old Tehran Tehran ,Janzadeh press, date.,?

Zurkhaneh (sport club³⁶) was considered. Tekiyehs were built like a circular building with a platform in the middle, instead of a pit on the ground for players, and boxes(chambers) surrounding it. The history of one of Tekiyeh, known as Tekiyeh Noroz Khan, coincided with the beginning of the rule of Fath Ali Shah in 1798".³⁷

Samuel R. Peterson on Tekiyeh writes:

"The term Tekiyeh, as used in Iran to refer to sites used for Shi'a communal mourning ceremonies, is applied to any site used for such purposes, whether it be a simple arena at the crossroads of a town or an elaborate building to accommodate an audience of thousands".

Then he brings in historical evidence and adds:

"Ibn al Athir's comment that in the tenth century (A.D.16th)coarse cloth tents were erected in Baghdad for Muharram ceremonies basically defines what were, until the advent of the Taziyeh drama, the essential needs for participating. Even after Taziyeh dramas were introduced and then established as a standard part of the mourning ceremony program, the maidan, Mosques, private residences, and other sites which customarily had been used for ceremonies were simply adopted to accommodate Taziyeh productions by providing provisional stages. Each had its separate advantage. Royal maidans(square) such as that outside the Gulestan Palace in Tehran and Maidan- Shah in Isfahan were suitable for the large audiences attracted by ceremonies sponsored by the court, whereas an advantage of smaller sites such as mosque or a private residence was the *houz* which, customarily a feature of the courtyard, could easily be converted into a stage by covering it with wooden planks. Additional advantage of the private residence were the convenience of a kitchen for the preparation of tea, sherbet, and refreshment for the audience, and the separate sections of the house which were used for differentiated seating: rooms looking onto the court served as loggia for honoured guests, the

36 An enclosed building with seating alcoves on a platform surrounding an octagonal arena.

37 Beizai op. cit., p.122-123.

court for general public and , if attendance was large, the roof for women and children"³⁸.

The considerable merit in Peterson's article lies in his attention to collecting written facts, by drawing on research on Tekiyeh, not only, in Tehran but also other cities .

"The earliest recorded evidence which at least suggests a permanent building dedicated to the use of mourning ceremonies is an inscription which, according to Henri Massé, is dated to 1202/1786 and is in a building in Astarabad he identifies as" a Darvish monastery(Tekye). A place where mourning ceremonies are held. "The edifice of the Tazyeh hall" in which all the world weeps for the martyrs of Kerbela".³⁹

While Chelkowski, in his bibliographical spectrum, introduces Samuel Hmelin's book, Reise durch Russland... Reise durch das nordische Persien in den Jahren 1770-1771 bis in April 1772(St.Petersburg,1774) remarks:

"Hmelin speaks about the prototype (sic, prototype) of takiyeh in the city of Rasht. Each borough of the town had its own special quarters where the Muharram procession would end and where the living tableaux would be staged."⁴⁰

The other old document at present available is a narrative by Khalil Saghafi⁴¹. He notes in his diaries that on 18th January 1845, in the company of the French plenipotentiary, he went to watch a Tazyeh (probably the Tazyeh of the Yazid's palace). They went to the Royal court.

³⁸ Peterson op. cit., p.65.

³⁹ Ibid., pp.66-67.

⁴⁰ Chelkowski op. cit., p.258.

⁴¹ Saghafi , Khalil (Alam-o-Dowleh). The Personal diary of Khalil Saghafi and Mansier Richard Khan , (Tehran : 1943)., p.115.

Lady Sheil gives us a description of a performance of Taziyeh in a massive House in Tehran in 1849. Though she does not mention the name of the house or the Tekiyeh but it could be surmised that the performance must have taken place in a specially constructed Tekiyeh , perhaps, similar to the Tekiyeh Dowlat, although the latter did not exist at that time.

As we see the courts of the Kajar supported Taziyeh and they built Tekiyehs in different sizes but very similar to the Tekiyeh Dowlat.

The description of Lady Sheil deserves to be set down in full:

"The stage, instead of being at the bottom of the building, was formed of a large elevated platform in the middle of the pit, if I may so call it, perfectly open on every side, and revealing, to the entire destruction of all exercise of the imagination, the mysteries which ought to pass behind the curtain. Two tiers of boxes surround the platform. The foreign ministers receive a formal invitation to attend the Tazeeya, as these performances are called, of the Prime Minister, to refuse which would be resented as highly discourteous. I too was included in the invitation. On reaching the building, I was conducted to a very comfortable *luge*, with an antechamber, or Kefshken "slipper-casting" room, where one leaves the outer shoes. The front of the box was carefully covered over with a thick felt carpet, pierced with small holes, which , while they allowed us to see all that passed, completely excluded us from the view of the audience. The Shah's box was at the top, facing the performers; on his right were the boxes of his uncles, the prime Minister, the English minister as senior, the Russian minister, etc. On his left were the boxes of his mother, who has no other title than that of Mader e Shah , the king's mother, and his wives; then that of the prime minister's wife, then mine, and next the Russian minister's wife. The fatigues of the day were relieved by constant supplies of tea and coffee, with pipes incessantly for those who liked them. The "house" was completely filled, and there must have been several thousand persons present, part of the pit was appropriated to women of humble condition, who were in great numbers, all however carefully veiled, and all seated on the bare ground. Before the "curtain drew up" it was ludicrous to witness the contention among these dames for places, which was not always limited to cries and execrations. They often proceeded to blows, striking each other heartily on the head with the iron heel of their slippers, dexterously snatched off the foot for the purpose; and worse still, tearing off

each other's veils; several ferashes were presented to keep the peace, armed with long sticks, with which they unmercifully belaboured these pugnacious devotees. It would be tedious to describe a drama of ten day's duration."⁴²

Now is an appropriate point at which to discuss the Tekiyeh Dowlat or Tekiyeh-i-Humayun (that built by a king), which is mentioned by travellers and tourists and compared in magnificence to the amphitheatre at Verona.

Benjamin writes:

"I was invited to attend on the fifth day of the Taziêh towards noon. On alighting from the carriage I was surprised to see an immense circular building as large as the amphitheatre of Verona, solidly constructed of brick⁴³.

When the construction of Tekiyehs became prevalent, Taziye productions improved, as did the quality of architecture, the prettiest example of which was called Tekiyeh-i-Dowlat (meaning government or the Tekiyeh of the state). This Tekiyeh was built by Nasser-din-Shah the Kajar at the end of 19th century in Tehran. It is said:

"when Naser al-Din Shah travelled to England in (1290 A.H./A.D. 1873-4), he attended a concert at Albert Hall and was so impressed that when he returned to Tehran he required his engineers to build a similar monument beside the Gulestan Palace to serve as a royal Takiyeh. Although one traveller remarks that the Takiyeh Dowlat in fact bore little resemblance to its London prototype, the immense circular brick building which was built was somewhat a marvel of Qajar engineering".⁴⁴

42 Lady Sheil op. cit., pp.125-130.

43 Benjamin op. cit., pp.382.

44 Peterson op. cit., p.69.

It is recorded that it cost a hundred and fifty thousand Tomans to build it⁴⁵. This expensive structure exemplified the height of state support for Taziyeh performance.

During the course of the first ten days of Muharram, in Tekiyeh Dowlat, Taziyeh performances were funded by the court. The king himself watched the ceremony of each day in this play-house. After the eleventh of Muharram until the end of Safar mourning ceremony performances were attended by ministers and the courtiers.⁴⁶

The Tekiyeh Dowlat was the most brilliant example of Iranian architecture of its time, and demonstrated great aptitude.

"If this royal amphitheatre of Tehrân were of polished marble like the amphitheatre of old, it would scarcely yield to them in the beauty and impressiveness of its interior. Material does really count for something in architecture, even if it appeals to the imagination alone. I could not avoid observing the masterly arrangement of the arches to produce strength and beauty alike. Whether the Persians borrowed the principle of the arch from the Assyrians or not, it is certain that they excelled in managing it before the Romans, to whom the discovery of the arch has been falsely attributed; and they still make it one of the most prominent and successful features of their architecture."⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Colonel Ahmad Amin, in his treatise in 1311 A.H/1893-94 A.D writes: Taziyeh is also called *Shabih*(representation). *Shabih* in imitation of the theatre was created by one of the officials who had gone to Europe on a special mission, and two -story buildings called *Takiyehs* usually built in the form of a theatre can be seen in every city and town of Persia, even in the smallest villages. At times other than the mourning days, the upper story serves as storerooms while the lower story is given over to shops and usually resembles a bazaar; but on the mourning days of Muharram each row of shops is decorated by one individual. Hangings and flowers are put in place. For ten consecutive days the tragedy of Karbela is enacted and the rest performed(sic). For example on one day the martyrdom of Imam Hussein is given and on another the part about Yazid and humiliations he inflicted upon the members of the family of Imam Hussein. At this time Hazzrat-e Ali appears, Gabriel comes, and music is played, and anyway a series of plays incompatible with Islamic traditions(sic) is given. Mahjub op. cit., pp.149-150.

⁴⁶ Qouted Djafar Shahri The Old Tehran vol 1 Amir Kabir press Tehran Iran 1976. pp.54-55.

Unfortunately, this glorious building was destroyed at the inception of Pahlavi's reign, in 1948.⁴⁸ Some reasons have been stated. For instance A.C Scott, generally on the prohibition of Taziyeh, writes:

"The Taziyeh was both a state and a religious festival which was finally abolished by the father of the present Shah of Persia (By present Shah he means Mohammad Reza Pahlavi the last king of Iran) as a measure to weaken the powers of the religious teachers.⁴⁹

Some Iranian scholars also have suggested reasons. For example Tekiyeh Dowlat was too unsafe to be used for Muharram ceremonies. "It is said that Tekiyeh Dowlat was destroyed in order to prevent the increase of people's feeling towards unity and solidarity".⁵⁰ It should be pointed out that, today, humble examples of the Tekiyeh are still prevalent in many of the cities and villages of Iran.

A useful summary, based upon available sources, would be as follow:

The Tekiyeh Dowlat was a wide, circular expanse, surrounded by a three storey building 24 meters in height. The diameter of this circle was about 60 meters and its area about 2826² meters. This building had no ceiling but scaffolding in the shape of a dome and steel rods protruding from the walls, on

⁴⁷ Benjamin op. cit., p.385.

⁴⁸ When the Pahlavi dynasty established its control during the early part of the 20th century, the attitude toward the Muharram rituals changed. Officially, the Taziyeh declined and was finally banished in 1932. The desire to separate the close relationship between church and state the attempt to thrust Iran into the mainstream of the present century are probably related factors with respect to the Pahlavi attitude. As a recent article points out, however, neutralizing the effects of ten-century tradition could not be achieved by mere royal decree. The potent repertory of symbols, popularized the Tazyieh, became the artillery of the religious revolution which toppled the Pahlavi regime. Rebecca Ansary Pettys "The Taziyeh: Ritual Enactment of Persian Renewal" Drama Review Oct 1981., -7.

⁴⁹ Scott, A.C The Theatre in Asia p.252

⁵⁰ Anassori, Jaber "Passion Play (Taaziz) A Treasure of Iranian Doctrinaire and Religious Plays" Kayhan International 14th July 1994., p.9.

which was spread a tarpaulin-like covering, which protected people from the rays of sun and inclement weather.

From the middle of this dome-shaped scaffolding, a chandelier hung, so that if the Taziyeh was performed at night numerous candle burners and candle sticks in different sizes and colours lit the whole area of the Tekiyeh. Around the auditorium of the Tekiyeh there were private boxes (Taghnuma), the fronts of which were decorated with oriental arches. These were reached by climbing six stairs. The well-off, rich and important people of the city generally provided and furnished the boxes and took care to fill them.

The main action took place on a stage that stood 25cm high. This was a stark, curtainless, raised platform in the center of the building, which the actors gained access to by four rows of equi-distant steps. Surrounding it was a narrow circular band of space occupied by the narrators when explaining sub-plots, or used to indicate the passage of time, change of scene, and journeys made by characters. There were usually two or more corridors through the seating area running from the central platform to the outer wall of the Tekiyeh. These provided access for messengers, armies and processions, which might include horses, camels and vehicles.

At one side of the Tekiyeh a big stone pulpit could be seen and usually, before the beginning of a Taziyeh, the preacher climbed into it and elaborated on the Imam's complaints and woes. Nearly four thousand women sat surrounding the platform, and since the ground on which they sat was slanting towards the platform every one could see the performance and no one inconvenienced others. The men sat on the other side of the aisle, a group of the people stood at the foot of the wall or stairs, but the majority of men congregated in the boxes.

On a performance of a majlis of Taziyeh within Tekiyeh Dowlat it is said: Before the beginning of a Taziyeh, an additional group of performers, comprising

of two hundred men in mourning outfits entered in two columns, and would exit after a few minutes of chest beating. The Taziyeh group or actors, singing harmonious mourning songs, whilst beating their breasts, enhanced the dramatic effect of the extras' time on stage, whose purpose was to create excitement and the intensification of anticipation. For this purpose the extras would only appear at the beginning of a Taziyeh. After the exit of chest-beating groups the military music band would play nostalgic tunes, followed by six groups of minor musicians. These would enter one after the other and would exit after singing a piece. The military band, which was the most competent and best equipped, would establish itself in a special place on one side of the stage, ready to play suitable pieces upon the order of the conductor.

Thereafter, a group of very young children in green outfits would appear, after whom would enter men in chain mail and helmets. *The children would start* singing mourning songs and the men would answer them in the same tone. This spectacle and the nostalgic singing prepared the audience for what was to follow. The action would consist of all the players walking around the Tekiyeh two by two, displaying discipline and dignity. They would then climb onto the platform and the children would gather at a higher position over-looking the group of players (on the stairs, for example). The rest of the performers would form a circle in the center and would sing the same tunes in the form of a dialogue. Afterwards the Taziyeh would start. On some occasions, before the beginning of the play, one of the players or the director would elaborate on the theme of the story.

On the first day of Muharram two plays were performed daily; one in the afternoon and another at night. It was considered better to attend the evening performance, much as it is in the modern western world, because the Tekiyeh became more glamorous and splendid with the light of a thousand candles. Plays were written to correspond with events of each of the first ten days of the

mourning period (depicting the death of each of the relations and supporters of Imam Hussein), and one was performed on each successive day of the anniversary.

Benjamin gives us a detailed account on Taziyeh in Tekyieh Dowlat and the Tekyieh itself. In the end of his account ,as a conclusion of his observance of this magnificent happening , remarks:

"After one has impartially set at one side a consideration of the excesses which have sprung out the Moharrêm celebration, there remains much to admire in the Taziêh. As one manifestation of the sentiments of a great religious sect it merits respectful attention, while on the other hand it is most interesting as an exhibition of the dramatic genius of the Persian race. It seems reasonable to infer that a decided talent for the drama exists in Persia, which only requires to receive toleration from the laws and customs of the country to reach a high degree of excellence."⁵¹

c; The development of several different types of Taziyeh.

"After Taziyeh presentation became regular and accepted, apparently during the reigns of Fath Ali Shah and Muhammad Shah, every one of the nobility participated in its development according to his understanding and sophistication. According to the story in *Tazkereh-e Ganj-e Shayegan*, Amir Kabir commissioned *Mirza Nasir Allah* of Isfahan, a master-poet of his era, to write twelve Taziyeh plays. The reason for this commission is explained thus:" At the beginning of this government... When the prime ministry of the kingdom and the command of the army was bestowed upon the late *Mirza Taqi Khan, Amir-e Nezam*(Amir Kabir), who was one of the capable men of the epoch and one of the prodigies of the period... Since most of the poetry that was spoken by those playing the members of the Holy Family in the Taziyeh performances and

⁵¹ Benjamin op. cit., pp. 405-406.

the assemblies depicting the mourning and calamity of the fifth person of the Family of the Rob(Imam Hussein) is poor, inappropriate, nonsensical, and erroneous, *Mirza Taqi Khan* commissioned him, saying 'Elegantly prepare twelve texts about those events in a style both pleasing to aristocracy and comprehensible to the commons'... He wrote the firebrand of verses so movingly."⁵²

Although his reign raised the Taziyeh to unaccustomed heights, *Nasir Idn Shah* the Kajar extended his interest widely to all kinds of spectacle and entertainment. He attended or supported both religious ceremonies and other amusements. As a dramatic phenomenon, Taziyeh attracted wide attention and thrived but this was perhaps not because of its religious aspect but because of its dramatic possibilities, which influenced a shift from purely scriptural subjects to the inclusion of secular material. The Tekiyeh became acknowledged as a place for buffoonery as secular popular comedy began to dominate the sacred. An example of how the context was compromising the religious value of the Taziyeh is found in Ettemad Al Saltaneh's description of a performance he witnessed:

"I heard last night in the Tekiyeh Dowlat the Majlis of Solaiman's Abbey was performed. On this night English and Italian ambassadors with their subjects were invited. When the Taziyeh was ended the famous comedian Ismael Bazaz accompanied by two hundred actors and musicians clothed in Iranian and European costume entered the Tekiyeh and began to fool around in such a manner that Taziyeh became worse than a show."⁵³

It has been also said that royal patronage led inevitably to a partial secularisation of the Taziyeh. Hiva Goran gives us another example and writes:

⁵² Quoted Mahjub op. cit., p.148.

⁵³ Quoted Mostofi op. cit.,p.591.

"The origin event, in some Taziyeh was diverted to new story. Characters in new form were shown in strange manner. In the majlis of "Fatimah goes to a wedding" the actress was shown in an European outfit with hat. Sometime for the sake of the comfort of spectators, an interval, between two sad acts, was suggested and then a short joyful melody or play was performed.⁵⁴

Hiva Goran in his footnote says this information has been taken from the memories of *Etemad al Saltaneh* in 1891.

The binding of a Demon's Thumbs is one of the comical type in which a mask is used by the actor who took the demon's role⁵⁵. The story is thus:

"The tidings of the appearance of a Demon and his ill-treatment of a citizen of Median was reported to the prophet Mohammed. The prophet ordered the summoning of the Demon. The heathen Demon denied God and the prophet.

Ali (peace be upon him) prepared to deliver people from the Demon's mischief. When the presumptuous Demon encountered Ali, he supposed he would overcome him through fighting. In practice what the Demon thought was reversed, Ali prevailed and tied together the thumbs of the Demon. The repentful Demon, while suffering his punishment, was guided to the prophet in order to be forgiven. In the presence of the prophet it was set out that the Demon should ask, for his forgiveness, and that of all the prophets. Then he would be spared from his punishment. The Demon explained he had done this already. Hereupon Mohammed ordered Abubaker

⁵⁴ Hiva Goran *Kosheshhay Na Farjam (Tragic effort)* Tehran, Aghah Publisher, 1979., p.77.

⁵⁵ Moreh in his study on Samaja and Muharrijun, in his book *Live theatre and Dramatic Literature in the Medieval Arabic World* hints on wearing of masks in two periods of time. The first is one which Ghoshman found in the Parthian time. The latter one is related to the Caliphate of Abbasid. On the former one he writes: On the lid of the cover for the oil intake is the fully sculptured figure of a monkey... The way in which this figure sits, carries its head, and is seen reading a scroll- all this points to a masked actor rather than an animal. He adds: If this should be the case, and it seems most likely that it is, the custom must have existed many centuries before the Muslim period. On the latter case Moreh writes: "When Al- Mutasm killed Al Afshin at the same time allowed entertainers to use such masks to celebrate the Nayruz" . May indicates that in the Abbasid court such masked celebrations in the Nayruz were a parody of Persian and Turkish ritual drama. Moreh op. cit., pp.45-46.

and Omar to open the Demon's hands but they were not able to do it. Then Ali was invited . When the Demon encountered Ali he recognised him and was frightened. But Ali assured him that this time he was going to deliver him from suffering. Henceforth the Demon became a good man".⁵⁶

As it is recounted the story does not imply a satire or ,as a whole, even a comic theme but rather it seems ,in its performance, comic dimensions were added to an otherwise serious play. Setting, outfit, music, make up and so forth contributed to creating this effect.(figures No:7 and 8)

The significance of comedy in Taziyeh is quite different with the common conventions of comic play. Mocking the villains or the enemy of the saints is the most significant intention amongst Taziyeh activists by *which they think of making* a comic Taziyeh. For instance in the Majlis of the Conquest of Khaibar the director of this Majlis created a new character who was a fortune teller in the court of the villains. This character, in fact, is the one who warns his friends, in the other terms the enemies, of the danger of the prophet's offspring. It is interesting to add that what he says is based on his belief in the light of the victory of the saints over villains. His language is in comic style and different from the other characters. He reads his poem in comic form. In his poem he sets out the infidelity, wickedness and unbelief of villains.

The fortune teller appears on stage with a different aspect to the customary features of the characters of the Taziyeh. He wears an artificial beard or a mask. His action is ludicrous and his word is boastful.

Laheh Taghian regarding this character in the 'Majlis of the conquer of Khaibar', performed in Tehran in 1991, writes:

⁵⁶ Beizai Arash , first year. Oct.Nov 1961.

"We should not forget the craft of Hashim Fayyaz who played the role of the fortune teller excellently. Except for this character the servants of the court of villains wear mask."

Taghian continues:

"Saints with green outfits on sat in the other side of the stage waiting to take part in the battle. One by one they went to war and became martyred. When His holiness Ali went to assist his friends and overcome the enemy a touching scene was created. The spectators up to now were laughing at the action of the buffoonery while they were anxious for the result of the battle. When they saw the victor Ali appeared in the stage and how he was hugged by the Prophet Mohammed comedy shifted to a tragedy and spectator were moved to tears.⁵⁷

Shahidi points on this issues and adds:

"The antagonists were made to appear ridiculous by the frivolous and buffoon-like behaviour of the actors playing the comic parts. For example an actor playing Shemr might attempt to elicit tears from the audience not by word or gesture but imitating extremely savage, cruel behaviour(such as pretending to behead a corpse and then dragging it across the stage)".⁵⁸

Besides the comic aspects of the Taziyeh, as we saw in the suggested examples, Taziyeh found ways to utilize other subjects such as historical, moral or religious and ,even in some extent, satirical themes, allowing that the main point, the event of Karbela and the martyrdom of Imam Hussein and his family, is always, in some way present in any type of Taziyeh⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Taghian , L "Taziyeh Exalted Phenomena in Iranian Culture" Namayesh (Theatre Monthly Review) No:19 May 1989., P.5.

⁵⁸ Shahidi op. cit., p.42.

⁵⁹ Dramas about various local saints took the lead in expanding the Taziyeh repertory. These , however, were linked to the Karbela tragedy by device which is known as 'Guris'(digression). Other stories were taken from the Quran and national legends, but even profane stories could be incorporated into the Taziyeh framework. By this device, the

To make the point clear it is fair to look at more examples of each type concisely.

The story of Joseph (paralleled in Christian literature) is exactly the same as that of *Yossuof* in the book of Surrah, contained in the Koran⁶⁰. Only some incidents have been added for the sake of emphasis. For example, when his Holiness *Jacob* laments at the finale of the story for himself and his children, Gabriel descends to him to berate him about his weak faith and lack of loyalty to God. He tells Jacob that the suffering and tragedy which he should tolerate in the name of God is one percent of what their Holiness Ali and Hussein will undergo when their time comes. Jacob is doubtful, so Gabriel orders an angel to re-enact the incident of Karbela for him. So the Taziyeh commences.

"O, may a thousand one like me and my Yusef be a ransom for Hussein!
May a thousand Yusefs be the dust of his feet..."

This is the message which sums up at the end of the play⁶¹.

Another of these plays - as a historical example - involves the great Moslem conqueror *Tamerlane*. Invading Syria, Tamerlane discovers that the governor of Damascus is of the house of Muawiyah, and so he spends his wrath upon the governor and later drives away his beautiful daughter, whom he had intended to marry. Agitated by this reminder of the catastrophe at Karbela, and unable to find

sagas of non-religious heroes were reduced to shallow and unimportant events vis-a- vis the supreme Karbela martyrdom. Chelkowski "Popular Entertainment, Media and Social Changes in Twentieth century Iran" The Cambridge History of Iran vol 7, p.773.

⁶⁰ See also The story of Joseph in the Quran and the Old Testament Islam Christian Muslim Relation Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations(CSIC) Birmingham, Vol 1,2 December 1990 p.171

⁶¹ See also Samuel R. Peterson's article on the "Taziyeh and Related Arts", part of the Taziyeh and Religious painting pp.78ff.

sleep or peace, Tamerlane is advised by his vizier to seek comfort by attending a Taziyeh. Tamerlane takes this advice and the scenes from Karbela follow.⁶²

What we have studied so far have been classified by scholars in three types. Let us record this division thus:

A; As long as Taziyeh deals with the incident of Karbela, commemoration of the event of martyrdom of Imam Hussein, it is celebratory. It appeals to the emotion or feelings of the audience. There is nothing intellectual or important that the audience has to contemplate. Majlisis such as The death of the Prophet Mohammad, The Murder of Ali and the Captivity of Hussein's family in Damascus after the massacre, could be included in this category.

In tradition this category is termed *Prima facie* the event of Karbela, which is called *Vagheh*(main theme)

B; Those plays in which the story is taken from the events of Karbela but framing the events with other stories such as Koranic and Biblical themes are teaching plays. In tradition this is called *Pish Vagheh* or *subsidiary plot*. They act didactically causing the audience to think or meditate on the comparative events.

C; The third type, in traditions called *Gusheh* which, in substance, has little or no direct relation to the main event of the Karbela. We may reckon the story of The Christian Daughter and Tying the Thumbs of the Demon(Shast bastan-e Div) in this category. I would add: when a play is purely fantastic or humorous or satirical it is purely for entertainment and does not strive to promote any other values.

To put a period to this part and to take us into Chapter Five, we present Gobineau and Algar's comment on Taziyeh.

⁶² See Banham ,Martin op. cit., p649

"Taziyeh finds a better parallel in the Ammergau passion play than in the Greek drama. They turn entirely on one subject- the suffering of the family of the tent."⁶³

Hamid Algar, in his article "Religious Forces in 18th and 19th century Iran" writes:

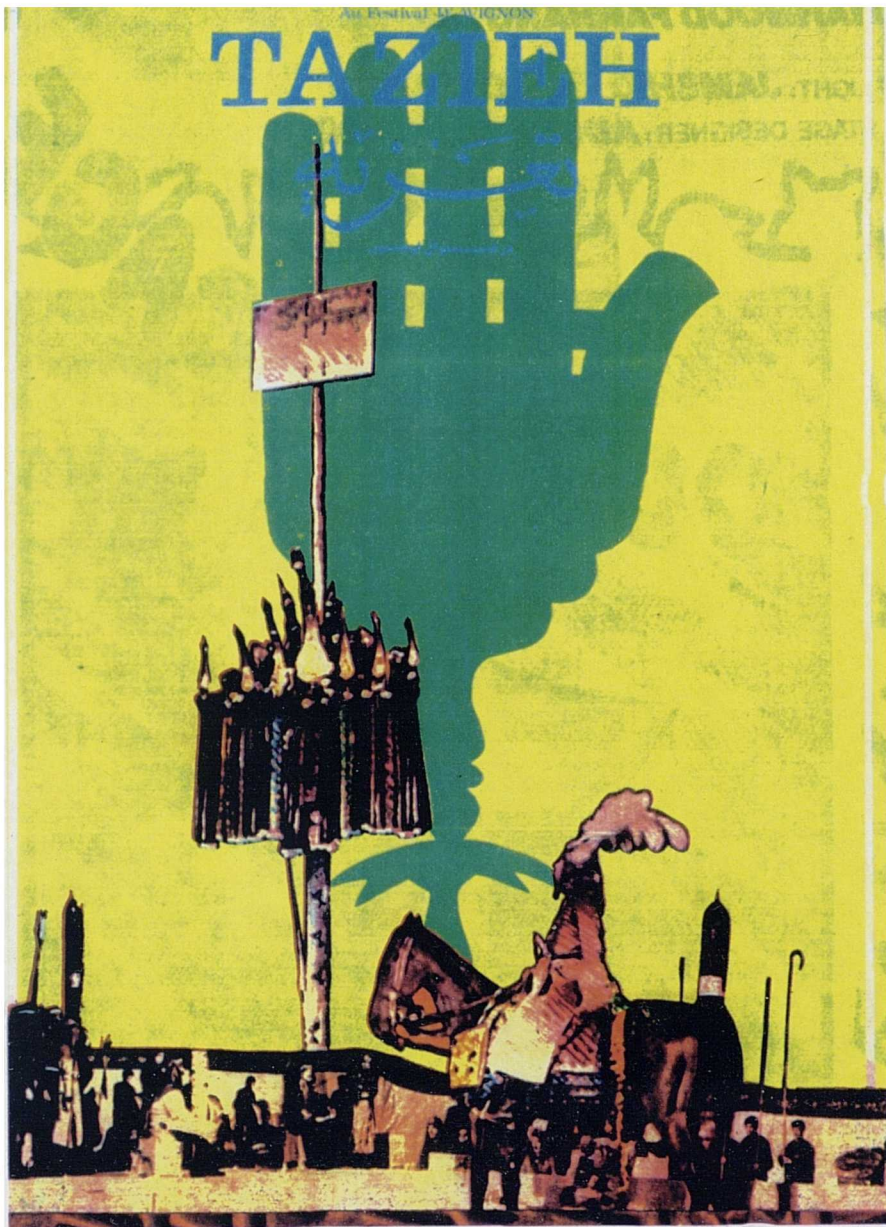
"At a popular level also , the Taziyeh gradually gave rise to a secular drama that drew its themes from the classical Persian romance. Despite these developments, the Taziyeh has remained a powerful means for both nurturing and expressing the effective loyalty of the Iranian masses to Shia Islam".⁶⁴



⁶³ Arnold , Matthew op. cit., p.233.

⁶⁴ Hamid Algar The Cambridge History of Iran vol 7 pp.725-726.

CHAPTER FIVE



The Poster of Taziyeh in the Festival of Avignon Namayah No:46, 1991.

Chapter Five

Contemporary critical and scholarly view of Taziyeh

Taziyeh is one of the dramatic forms of activity which , despite available sources, has not been studied widely. Even, in this last decade of the twentieth century it is hard to find reliable and germane sources which are free from allusions to western prototypes. In the course of last two decades superficial and generalised studies have appeared which have raised questions about Taziyeh.

Peter, J Chelkowski in his article" Bibliographical Spectrum" has looked at written works on Taziyeh , by non-Iranian scholars and Iranians, during the following periods.

- a; The Safavid and post-Safavid period(1500-1786)
- b; Qajar period to world War II.
- c; From world War II to the present (1976).

He writes:

" In Iran it is only in the last fifteen years or so that Taziyeh has received attention from the literary world. Several major factors contributed to this interest. The first was the appearance of a growing number of memoires dating from the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, in which the authors not only praised Taziyeh but also gave vivid descriptions of Taziyeh theatrical performances."¹

Chelkowski attributes to Abdullah Mostaofi, *Sharh-i Zandigani-man* (Tehran 1334/1955-56) the primary role in beginning the new scholarship. As a second initiative he gives the Festival of Arts in Shiraz. As the third initiative

¹ Chelkowski op. cit., pp.255.-268.

Chelkowski assesses the written works on Taziyeh by students and scholars in the new established departments of dramatic arts in some universities.

What all these chart are a new interest in and appraisal of Taziyeh between Mostofi's period and the present day.

The general outline, features and conventions of the Taziyeh are well known to all Iranians. But the plays exist in a variety of forms into which are incorporated the specific cultural features, idioms and proverbs of each locale. Audiences in the north would have some difficulties with performances mounted in the south of the country and vice versa. In the same way, visitors from outside the country, seeking to interpret Taziyeh in terms of their own culture, often place emphasis in the wrong places. Those familiar with the work of Brecht comment on Taziyeh as an extreme example of the application of the *Verfremdungseffekte*, (the effect of 'estrangement' or alienation which is Brecht's particular contribution to the theatre²) which misses completely the specific nature and intention of Taziyeh. Internal and external possibilities for misinterpretation make it difficult to include local Taziyeh in a wider situation, a festival for example. The Taziyeh needs its own audiences. It needs an audience at home with the conventions of acting and scenery and able to respond to this. Taziyeh is both performance and ritual ceremony, arising out of and contributing to the inherent culture of the locale.

During the course of the second Pahlavi regime events occurred which raised hopes for the reviving of the Taziyeh.

As Parviz Sayyad, one of the state artists and film makers of the time, says :

² In the Cambridge Companion to Brecht we read on *Verfremdungseffekt* which is better translated as 'distancing' than 'alienation' effect.

The Cambridge Companion to Brecht ed Peter Thomson and Glendyr Sacks Cambridge University Press 1994., p.252.

"Taziyeh after sixty four years suffering from prohibition was allowed to appear, formally, as a form of traditional religious theater of Iran in the arts festival of Shiraz.³

Prior to this for the opening of the newly built government theater called *Twenty-fifth Sharivar* (now Sangalaj) in 1965, Sayyad produced and staged *Majmu'ayi Irani* ("Iranian Collection") in which he performed The Majlis of "*Abdullah -e Afif*" surreptitiously.

This was a medley of traditional forms of entertainment which was a great success. This collection was also broadcast on radio and shown on television.

For the inauguration of the Shiraz Arts Festival in 1967 Sayyad brought the Taziyeh play of *Hurr* in which professional Taziyeh actors and musicians from all over the country participated. For subsequent Shiraz Festivals he produced two other Taziyeh plays.⁴

Sending Taziyeh to the Arts Festival of Shiraz, after its long prohibition was significant but it should be pointed out that reviving Taziyeh in this way, by the state, altered the experience and function considerably. Peter Brook describes two performances of Taziyeh in Iran in 1970. The former was in one of the remote villages of Mashhad and the latter one was in the International Festival of Arts in Shiraz. Comparing two performances and their audiences he remarks:

"The audience is the factor that makes the event alive. When the nature and motivation of the audience changed the play lost all of its meaning."⁵

³ Hurr , Arts festival of Shiraz 1971, p.1.

⁴ Quoted Chelkowski, Peter "Popular Entertainment, Media and social change in Twentieth-Century Iran." (Article No:21) The Cambridge History of Iran Vol seven From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic Cambridge University Press 1991., pp.807-808.

⁵ "The Ring of Harmonies" The Independent 21th of November 1993., p29.

Before going through the Brook's description on the two performances let us look at the Lassy Ivar's point on the audience of Taziyeh, cited in Asgar's thesis.

"The audience is not considered a mass apart from the performers. On the contrary, the spectators are to a certain degree co-actors, namely in so far as they execute the role of the companions of the Martyrs, by loudly weeping over their misfortunes and death..."⁶

However, Peter Brook in respect of the audience and the performance of Mashhad writes:

"The story became clear the Imam was safe for the present but he had to travel farther. To do so, he would have to pass his enemies; who were preparing an ambush. As they snarled and shouted out their evil intentions, fear and dismay rippled through the spectators.

Of course everyone knew that he would make the journey, and everyone knew he would be killed, but at first it seemed as though somehow today he could avoid his fate. His friends argued with him not to go. Two small boys singing in unison, his sons, came into the circle and begged him not to leave. The martyr knew the fate that awaited him. He looked at his sons, sang a few poignant words of farewell, clasped them to his chest and then strode away, big farmers' boots carrying him firmly across the ground. The boys stood watching him leave, their lips trembling. Suddenly they ran after him, throwing themselves at his feet. Again they repeated an entreaty in the same high musical phrase. Again he answered with his melody in farewell. I became aware of a low murmur all around, and taking my eyes for a moment off the action, I saw lips trembling, hands and handkerchiefs stuck in mouths, faces wrought with paroxysms of grief. First the very old men and women, then the children and the young men on bicycles all sobbed freely.

The charge of energy was so powerful that we could not break the circuit, and so we were in a unique position as observers close to the heart of an event of an alien culture, without bringing to it any disturbances of distortion".

⁶ Asgar, Jalal A Historical Study of The Origins of The Persian Passion Plays University of Southern California Ph.D., 1963., p212.

Commenting on Taziyeh in Shiraz, Brook remarks:

"In the presence of the queen and 500 international festival guests in gala evening dress, totally indifferent to the sacred content, the villagers were put, for first time in their lives, on a platform facing front, with spotlights blazing down on them through which they could dimly perceive a bank of society figures, and they were expected "to do their stuff". The rubber boots worn by the village shopkeeper, in which he had looked very smart, had been replaced by leather ones, the temporary props had been replaced with well-made ones, but no one had stopped to ask what "stuff" they were expected to do. And why? And for whom? These questions were never put, because no one was interested in the answers. So the long trumpets hooted, the drums played and it meant absolutely nothing.

The spectators, who had come to see a pretty piece of folklore, were delighted. They did not realise that they had been conned and that what they had seen was not a Taziyeh. It was something quite ordinary, devoid of any real interest, which gave them nothing. They didn't see this because it was presented ; as "culture" and at the end the officials smiled and everyone happily followed them toward the buffet".⁷

The apogee of Taziyeh , in the Arts Festival of Shiraz, occurred in the tenth festival ,but unfortunately, alongside some other performances which were not in agreement with the morals and the ethics of the Iranian society.

"The board of directors of the festival of Arts takes pleasure in announcing that the traditional and ritual drama of Iran will be the focus of the anniversary of the festival in 1976. These Dramas, called Taziyeh, will be performed by theatre groups brought to Shiraz from throughout Iran."⁸

See also Lassy, Ivar. The Moharam Mysteries Among the Azerbaijan Turks of Caucasia - An Academic Dissertation. Helsingfors: Liliivs and Hertsberg, 1916., p.104.

⁷ The Independent 21th of November 1993., p.29.

⁸ Ghaffary, Farrokh The preface of Taziyeh: Indigenous avant-garde Theatre of Iran Soroosh Tehran 1975.p.3.

The result of the international symposium on Taziyeh held during the course of this festival (August 20-24 1976) was the publication of a book ,edited by Peter Chelkowski, describing most various aspects of Taziyeh, discussed in this symposium by scholars in the field of Oriental studies. But it should be pointed out that, as the writers have been introduced in the section of the 'notes on contributors' of this book, they are mostly non-theatre people.

Besides this symposium there was also a historical exhibition of Taziyeh materials, including models, drawings and photographs of playhouses, films of performances, scripts, costumes, props and pardeh, the oil-painted backdrops used for one-man travelling performances.

Farrokh Gaffary, the director of Institution for Traditional Performance and Ritual, regrets the banning of Taziyeh from a practical point of view.

"I am certain that if students of anthropology had turned to Taziyeh forty-eight years ago when it was banned by Iranian governments for sociopolitical reasons, a major share of the Iranian national Theatre today would be plays (with or without religious subject matter) directly derived from Taziyeh."⁹

After the establishment of the Islamic republic in Iran the Arts Festival of Shiraz was closed. Taziyeh as the civil art returned to the common people retaining all its traditional format. More than a decade later, in spring 1991, Taziyeh was presented in the Festival of Avignon in France. The quality of the presentation of Taziyeh in these two Festivals, Shiraz and Avignon, shows us that the Arts Festival of Shiraz presented a half-dead Taziyeh as a traditional form of religious drama whereas in the Avignon Festival Taziyeh was performed as an active and alive passion play in Iran though critically with the same unfortunate results. Unlike Taziyeh in Shiraz Festival, this time, the dispatched Taziyeh group

⁹ Ibid ., p.2.

offered, without resorting to any artificial effort, a pure Taziyeh performance based on the traditional format of acting and presentation of Taziyeh.

Gilles Anquetil's report on Taziyeh at the Festival of Avignon, as is common with non-Iranian writers or scholars, gives a brief information on Imam Hussein and his Martyrdom.

"The real theatrical shock people may experience in Iran is not related to the effects produced by the awkward attempts at the spurious mixing of tradition and modernity. The real and beautiful shock comes from the Taziyeh, the religious form of theatre which has been used for centuries in the commemoration of the passion of the Shiite martyrs and, in particular, that of the Imam Hussein murdered in 680 in the Karbela Valley. In the past this authentic form of Iranian theatre deeply moved French travellers such as Chardin, Tavernier, Gobineau or Loti. But under the reign of the Pahlavi, this popular theatre which attracted thousands of people when performed in villages at times of great religious mourning had virtually gone underground. Because they could exalt and exacerbate religious and national feelings, these plays were seen as threats by the last two consecutive reigning monarchs. Today the Iran of the ayatollahs, has, in quite a natural move, returned to the source of the Taziyeh.

Then Gilles Anquetil turns to look at the quality of the performance of Taziyeh but lacks the terminology to describe or assess it.

"On stage, a little Fellinien orchestra composed of two trumpets, a clarinet and deep resonating brass drums, hurls its obsessive tunes. A short time elapses before a strange musical atmosphere gets hold of the place. Where are we? For us, the strange music evokes at the same time a parade music from the circus and Andalusian music. It is truly poignant. The scene projects an invisible sacred drawing in the form of a circle around which the actors turn in repeated movements as one does when running around a stadium. The sounds of drums accompany this mystical round. Then the bewitching Shiite opera starts. The actors, wearing colourful sleeveless dresses sing with an antic and intense fervour the tragedy of the partisans of Ali. Battles, duels, fights come to punctuate with magical realism and a naturalism oozing blood, the great episodes of the drama. The voices are allurements and beautiful. It is the song of a sorrow which arises

from the deepest recesses of the soul. All the Iranian sense of religious passion is expressed with an incredible intensity. The actors who play the role of Hussien's enemies are denied the right to sing and must adopt the rough voices of the wicked. The contrast between the martial tunes of the assassins of the Imam and the moving singing of the future martyrs has a striking power. A Taziyeh usually lasts two hours.

In the countryside, in the middle of the horses and the crowd of the supporting actors, those who play the role of the wicked need sometimes protection from the holy anger of the audience. Often, the actors would cry with the public. For a Shiite, weeping can have a healing virtue, therefore, he cries to purify his soul. In times of mourning, some members of the audience enter in trance and proceed with self-inflicted blows to themselves, all the while muttering the name of Hussein.

The only point upon which Anquetil hits the target, is the catharsis generated by the performance. He writes: "*The Taziyeh is truly a powerful and pure experience of catharsis*".¹⁰

Taziyeh in Comparison with Greek Drama, Medieval Plays, Modern Drama

Taziyeh has usually been seen in terms of Western dramaturgy but some studies have found this uncomfortable recognising that Taziyeh possesses some dramatic features which do not fit easily within such judgments.

We look at the different views of scholars on the dramatic features of the Taziyeh. Andrzej Wirth remarks:

¹⁰ Gilles Anquetil, Translated extracts from "Iran: The Religion of Shows" (Iran la religio du spectacle) "*le nouvel Observateur*" Mars 1991, No:1376., pp.74-75.

"It becomes increasingly obvious that the application of the Aristotelian dramatic terminology to the confessional folk opera of Iran, Taziyeh, is misleading on both cultural and structural grounds. And yet terms such as prologue, epilogue, climax, action, and above all dialogue, are uncritically used in the discussion on Taziyeh. For Aristotle dialogue was a device to convey the plot, and in these terms it was considered a timeless form of drama. In Taziyeh, however, what appears on first glance to be colloquial form, does not really promote any plot, and resembles rather a soliloquy, an instance of uttering ones thoughts aloud, without addressing any person in particular."¹¹

Metin And says:

"Taziyeh is total and the totality is achieved in many ways and through many dramatic devices and conventions. Poetry, narration, music, costume and mime create a synthesis, forming an integral part of the drama and enrich and heighten the thematic content".¹²

Studying the conventions of western theatre has assisted Taziyeh scholars in isolating its specific dramatic features particularly when comparing Taziyeh, as a drama, with reference to Greek Tragedy¹³, medieval mystery and miracle plays¹⁴ and ,even , schools of modern drama.

¹¹ Wirth, Andrzej op. cit., p.32.

¹² And, Metin "Taziyeh ; Tragedy in Islam, its conventional and Ritualistic Elements, its Dramatic Values with reference to Greek Tragedy and its Significance for the modern Theatre". International Theatre (Warszawa) 1979., p.38

¹³ Greek drama and Taziyeh have a well defined ritual aspect which has tended to become overlaid with the passing of time. Religious ceremony has emerged from the purely ritualistic origins and become the beginning of what we know as theatre. Metin And op. cit., pp.40.

See Drama at the Crossroads op. cit., p.117.

¹⁴ Like the Medieval drama in Europe -indeed like any drama- the Persian Passion plays were the result of the application of the universal histrionic impulse to existing narrative. The application of this impulse to the liturgical narrative of Christian Europe created- especially in France- the Mystery plays; its application to the legends of saints in

Mehdi Forough tries to find resemblances between Taziyeh and Greek drama and Middle Ages drama :

"The Greek classical drama developed in 500 B.C. from festivals in honour of Dionysus. The England , French and German drama , in the form of Mystery and Miracle plays, emerged during the Middle Ages from liturgical and scriptural narrative. Wherever we go we find analogies*."

"In all these music plays an important part and the medium is poetry. The origin of the Greek drama was in the songs sung at religious festivals while the medieval drama consisted at the beginning of responses and tropes antiphonally chanted by the monks. The Persian Passion plays originated from devotional verses responsively sung as part of an annual religious performance celebrating the martyrdom of Ali and his sons Imam Hassan and Imam Hossein."¹⁵

Let us study them in a different way.

a; Comparing Taziyeh with the Greek Drama.

Metin And in the eighth chapter of his book Drama at the Cross-roads gives us , in detail, a comparison between Taziyeh and Greek tragedy. He maintains several similar common characteristics in both forms. Here, I have abridged and described features listed by Metin And as follow:

1- Fictitious names for characters are avoided both in Greek tragedy and Taziyeh.

England and elsewhere produced the Miracle plays; its application to the tragic legendary story of Karbela in Iran produced the Persian Passion Plays. It is particularly at this phase of their development that the Persian Passion Plays and Medieval European drama resemble each other most strongly.
Forough op. cit., p.43.

¹⁵ Forough op. cit., p.3*, p.43.

2- In both dramas the central characters are caught in the grip of fate which drives them to their inevitable doom. And in both, the hero or heroine shows a willingness and an immense capacity to suffer.

3- Like the Greek tragedies staged annually at the religious festivals in Athens and other cities, Taziyeh has similar fixed dates annually.

4- Both dramas emphasise a serious significance, governed by a respect of the quasi-religious ritual roots of the respective drama, which do not impair the vitality of the drama.

5- Both Greek drama and Taziyeh are written in verse, marked off by choral songs or other lyrics.

6- In both forms we find a chorus. Yet their functions differ.

7- Both forms make use of masks, yet they differ in their functions. The use of masks in Greek tragedy is the outcome of economy of rules among other functions, whereas in Taziyeh the use of masks is made to serve other purposes, especially that of showing supernatural beings such as demons, beasts, giants and djins.

8- Taziyeh, like the Greek theatre, is not set apart for a particular group, it is a theatre for the masses. Neither theater is aimed at a single segment of society, Taziyeh, like the Greek theatre, appeals at many levels to each spectator (emotionally, spiritually and intellectually) and to all levels of a given society.

9- The audience of both dramas are intimately acquainted with the stories, and have fore-knowledge of the events.

10- Both theatres have at their disposal the means of imparting foreknowledge, these being the chorus, messengers, divinities, oracles, supernatural prophecies, the personal appearance of God's, messenger Gabriel, or the Prophet's voice, and other to make important contributions to the drama.

11- In both theatres the costumes, especially their colouring, are conventionalised so that the habitual theatre-goer will immediately recognise the characters. In both forms women's parts are acted by male performers.¹⁶

¹⁶ Quoted And, Metin Drama At The Crossroads Turkey, Istanbul, The Isis Press, 1991., PP.117.-118.

Jalal Asgar maintains several differences between the Heroes in the Taziyeh and the Greek tragedy. He emphasises the modality of the presence of character in both drama. He writes:

"Contrary to the Greek hero who did not know his destiny, the Persian hero has foreknowledge of his fate. If Oedipus had known from the beginning that he was to kill his father and marry his mother, the drama would have had a completely different meaning. But Husain knows all the time that he will finally be killed in the Karbela near the Euphrates".

Asgar finds differentiation in that Imam Hussein acts towards the will of God against the will of man.

"In Greek tragedy, even when a hero attempts to find truth, finding it may cause his downfall, whereas in Tazias the truth is already known to the hero, and it is he who wants other to know it. Husain wants to disseminate the truth, whereas Oedipus wants to find it".

It is hard to find a link between the above comparison since the distance between the time of ancient Greece (B.C) and the time of Imam Hussein is huge. Between these periods humanity found, learned and was taught uncountable matters in different subjects, particularly in religion. The attitude of man, based upon his beliefs is far different from that which existed before Christ and other Prophets. Looking at gods of Greek tragedy and comparing them with God is not feasible, particularly in respect to their presence and interference within human affairs. However Asgar persists:

"The antagonist in Greek tragedy is the hero's fate, or perhaps more accurately an agent for it of the gods. In Tazias God is Husain's guide and supporter; it is men only who are his antagonists.

The Greek gods have no mercy ; they are mean and vengeful; but so is the Syrian army, specially its leaders Shemr and Omar Ibn-Sâd".

Asgar ends his comparison with the following point :

"The matter of separation of the pious from the sinful does not exist in Greek tragedies. The tragedies were not presented to show the audience who was to go to Hades¹⁷ and who to Elysium¹⁸, But in Tazias there is a quality of judgment about the characters represented on the stage. The pious are blessed and the wretched are cursed."¹⁹

b; Medieval Drama:

The heart of similarity ,of course , is in theme and treatment between the event surrounding the massacre at Karbela which is celebrated on the tenth of Muharram, and the English Medieval cyclical plays, in performances associated with the Feast of Corpus Christ , but rooted in the liturgical calendar of Christianity, particularly Christmas and Easter, a sequence focused both episodically and theologically around the martyrdom of Jesus at Calvary.

Based upon the analysis of the two traditions, their themes, treatments and cultural location, a number of plays could be "paired" between English and Persian plays, with one- to- one comparison allowing a number of specific reverberations and echoes to be explored. For instance the comparison of "*Ibrahim Sacrificing*

¹⁷ (GK. Myth) Place where the spirits of the dead go. Oxford Dictionary.

¹⁸ (KG Myth) Home of the blessed after death; Place or state of perfect happiness. Oxford Dictionary.

¹⁹ See Asgar, Jalal A Historical Study of The Origins of The Persian Passion Play University of Southern California Ph.D. 1963., pp.143.-144.

Ismail" is one which Forough has made with a French play of Beaz's "Abraham Sacrifiant" and an English play, the Brome version of the "Sacrifice of Isaac".²⁰

As a whole it is possible to find resemblance between most of plays in the four cycles, or Beverley list, and Taziyeh plays. Yet it should be taken into consideration that they could be divided into two specific groups of similar plays. The first group includes plays which are similar in sources (Biblical and Quranic) in which we are able to find close similarity in their context, subject and even title. For instance the Majlis of "Qabil and Habil" alongside "Cain and Abel". As I have introduced earlier, "Abraham and Ismael" links naturally with the "Abraham and Isaac. "Joseph " links with the "Joseph and his Brethren".²¹

The latter group, plays which seem to have similarity in theme and story-line presenting various ideas, such as that of Prophecy.

The Prophetic plays tell the coming of Christ²². A similar spirit is fused in the Majlis of "*Zakaria*" (who was the father of John the Baptist), a play largely given over to prefigurations of the tragedy of Karbela. Consideration will also be given to the Majlis of "*Soloman and Bilqius*"²³ which ends with the same reference. And in the Majlis of the birth of Imam Hussein, in the first day of his life, on earth his martyrdom dramatically foreshadowed.²⁴

In both Medieval religious drama and the Taziyeh plays sacred characters tend to be congenitally depicted and their treatment held within a tone of voice that

²⁰ See M Forough op. cit., p .41 ff.

²¹ See Young, Karl The Drama of the Medieval Church Oxford At the Clarendon Press 1933 p.266ff.

²² Ibid., pp.125-171. (Chapter xxi, The Procession of Prophets)

²³ See Annasori, Jaber Taziyeh; Tragic Play Tehran University press 1986. pp.60.-68.

²⁴ These Majlises are amongst the third type of the division of Taziyeh.

is subject to little variation. On the other hand, within both traditions, there is a substantial elaboration of the bad character, Evil characters know who they are and say so, without shame of evasion. Pilate in the Wakefield Cycle is a gigantic personification of evil. In part, as has often been pointed out, he is the unjust judge of medieval satire. The most striking way, however, in which Pilate far exceeds the role of unjust judge is in his unexplained hostility to Christ:

ffor no thyng in this world dos me more grefe
 Then for to here of Crist and of his new lawes;
 To trow that he is godys son my hart wold all to-clefe,
 Though he be never so trew both in dedys and in sawes
 Therfor shall he suffre mekill myschefe.²⁵

In the end , in summary, comparison could be found in:

- a; Texts and their Liturgical and popular roots.
- b; Themes, treatment and imagery.
- c; Characterisation.

c; Taziyeh and Modern Drama

Taziyeh as a ritual and traditional drama of Iran with its epic narrative form, during the course of the last two decades of this recent century , has been realized as comparable with the theory of the Brechtian Theatre.²⁶ There are similarities

²⁵ Woolf, Rosemary The English Mystery Plays London Routledge and Kegan Paul 1972., p.249.

see also Medieval Drama, ed Neville Denny Chapter II written by Paula Neuss "Active and Idle Language: Dramatic Images in Mankind" Edward Arnold Publication , 1973., PP.41.-67.

²⁶ In Brecht's view, drama, and contemporary German drama especially, invited its spectators to empathise with the emotional destiny of its central individual characters. Audiences were encouraged to surrender to the suspense and consolations of the well-made

but also significant differences to be seen within the styles of presentation of Taziyeh and Brechtian Theatre. Iranian scholars know Taziyeh as narrative theatre- in so far as it gives a view of a critical period of history- they can compare it with the epic narrative form of Brechtian Theatre. Similar features appear clearly in the following:

"The stage began to tell a story. The narrator was no longer missing. Not only did the background adopt an attitude to the events on stage. The actors too refrained from going over wholly into their role. The stage began to be instructive."²⁷

As many and just as profound differences appear in the following:

"The exposition of the story and its communication by suitable means of 'alienation' Brecht wrote in A Short Organum, 'constitute the main business of the theatre' : a statement which usefully summarises the relation of Verfremdungseffekte and 'epic'. The new narrative content signalled by the term 'epic' was to be communicated in a dialectical non-illusionist and non-linear, declaring its own artifice as it hoped also to reveal the workings of ideology. 'Alienating an event or character', wrote Brecht, 'means first of all stripping the event of its self-evident, familiar, obvious quality and creating a sense of astonishment and curiosity about them. The direct and indirect use of narrator, the conspicuous use of songs, masks, placards and images set in a montaged narrative sequence would help maintain this level; of wonder and alert self criticism. Beyond this, however, the repertoire of estranging effects would aim to produce a double perspective on events and actors so as at once to show their present contradictory nature and their historical cause or social motivation. In a frequent image, this would be like following the course of river and staying above it, remaining both inside and above the stream."²⁸

play, faithful to the unities of time and place and their naturalistic depiction. Brecht associated these conventions with the categories of 'mimesis', imitation, and 'catharsis', the purging of the emotions of pity and fear, first outlined by Aristotle in the Poetics. The Cambridge Companion to Brecht, ed Peter Thomson and Glendyr Sacks Cambridge University Press, 1994., p.188.

27 Peter Thomson op. cit., p.189.

28 Peter Thomson op. cit., p.191.

There are major differences revealed by the characterisation in both dramas, Taziyeh and Brecht. In Taziyeh the central characters are Prophets, Imams and superhuman personalities possessing superhuman virtues whereas in Brecht theatre the central characters are the ordinary man and his worldly and social needs and problems. Probably the most productive point to follow in making any sort of comparison begins with the Brecht's search in various forms of oriental theatre²⁹ for the techniques through which the concept of distancing , in all its aspects, could be realised.

Mamnoun is critical of Brecht 's attempt:

"From the point of view of the Brechtian narrative theatre, Taziyeh is theatre; a theatre whose form, one might say, Brecht strove unsuccessfully to attain. This was not because Brecht's knowledge of the theatre was inferior to that of the Taziyeh producers; rather his failure was due to a misunderstanding, a contradiction which Brecht was unable to perceive as he wanted to invest the realistic content of Western theatre with the form of narrative theatre (which is Eastern in origin)".

Mamnoun in the light of the nature of the theory of narrative theatre remarks:

"It was also this contradiction which drew the narrative theatre of Brecht toward the invention of complicated formulas, perplexing theories, and obscure ratiocinations; and it was the reason that until now his theory of narrative theatre has remained only a theory".

²⁹ Piscator and Brecht insisted that they were following a long-established tradition, evident in the oriental theatre, the classic Greek Drama, the Medieval Mystery-plays cycles, the Elizabethan drama, and the romantic theatre that adopted the open Shakespearean drama from the eighteenth-century "Sturm und Drang" period of Goetz von Berlichingen and Die Räuber to the late romantic period of Büchner and Gutzkow. Gassner, John Directions in Modern Theatre and Drama London, Holt, Rinehart and Winstion, Inc, 1956., pp.298-9.

"It is with regard to this contradiction that we said that Taziyeh is the theatrical goal which Brecht sought to achieve- it is the most developed theatre in the narrative theatrical form.

The proposition is this: From its inception Taziyeh did not seek to be realistic or to achieve realism: the tragedy of Kerbela was so important to the Taziyeh performer, so exceptional and extraordinary that it would have been impossible to show it realistically within the means and possibilities of performance, which are at least only a vehicle by which it is possible to show this tragedy but not to reproduce it.³⁰

Metin And also believes that Taziyeh will be incorporated into Western theatre. "Taziyeh has a number of lessons to offer to Western theatre, specific lessons in techniques and approaches to particular theatrical problems."

"Taziyeh does not divide the theatre into distinct worlds, that is actors and audience. On the contrary it brings a deep feeling of intimacy between actors and audience.

The structure of Taziyeh may be a kind of ferment in the creation of new dramas and a great contribution to the revitalisation of modern theatre. Taziyeh is a rich storehouse of conventions and flexibility of form for those in search of a workable style and a means of expressing certain new and urgent concerns".³¹

Andrzej Wirth does not agree with And's comments. He believes Taziyeh is merely a sort of means to remember and respect sacred ones. He writes:

"Taziyeh neither tells the story nor dramatise it; its performances is therefore neither epic nor dramatic, but confessional. It uses an epic style of acting but is incapable, and also not interested, in presenting alternatives".³²

In spite of the efforts made by some dramatists or scholars, to prove that Taziyeh is an actual drama and its dramatic conventions can be harmonized with the convention of acting of the different periods, places and schools of drama,

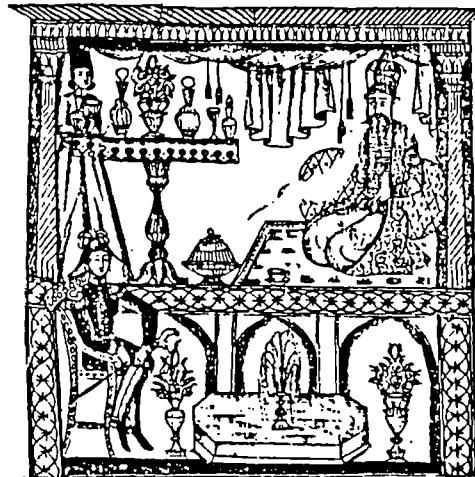
30 Mamnoun op. cit., pp.157.-158.

31 Metin , And Taziyeh, Tragedy in Islam op. cit. p.40.

32 Wirth op. cit., p.34.

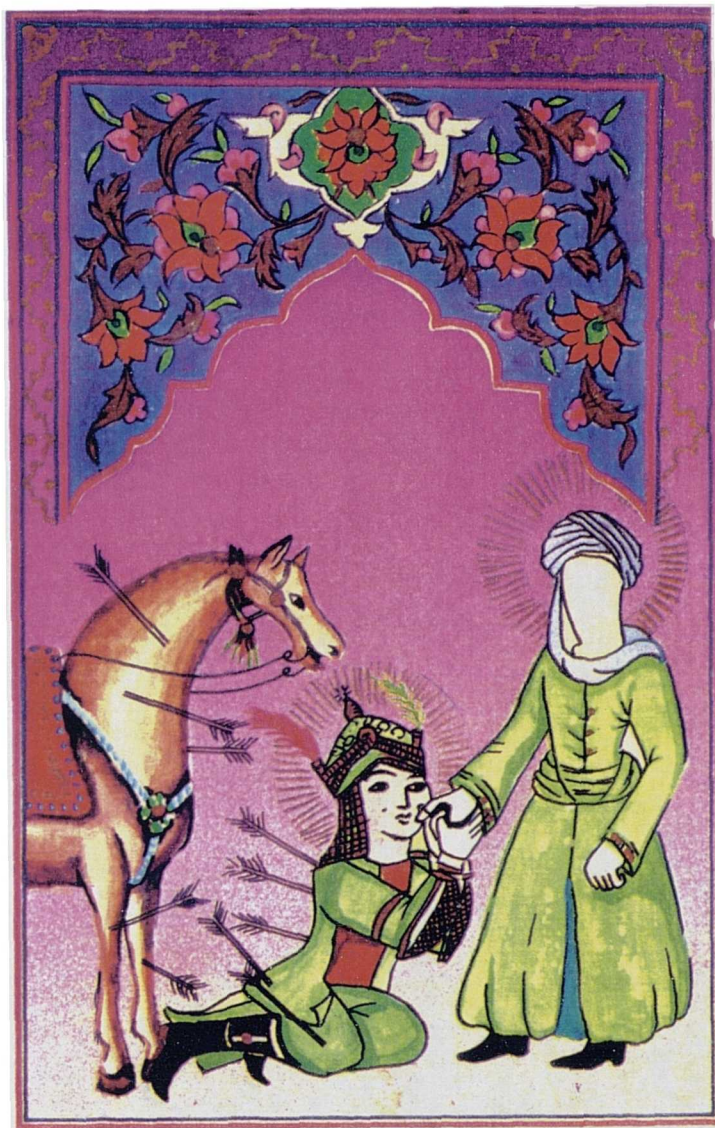
Wirth again, suggests a contradictory comment on acting within the Taziyeh when he writes:

"The paradox of Taziyeh is that being basically non-epic and non-dramatic event, it produces an epic demonstrative style of acting. The modern Western theatre made its way to epic acting in a polemical strife with the naturalistic tradition of empathy, through the application of the Asiatic techniques, and through the way-breaking mediation of Brecht. Acting in Taziyeh is a part of the great Asiatic tradition. It is focused not on the character, but on the role. The performer appears as a carrier of a predefined character, and concentrates on his role more in relation to the spectators than in relation to himself (empathy) or to the other performers(dramatic interaction). In Western terms acting in Taziyeh is neither Stanislawski nor Brecht. The acting is frontal, expository(to the House which in the Takiyeh is all around), based on stereotyped gestures."³³



³³ Quoted Andrzej Wirth "Semiological Aspects of Taziyeh (Article No:4) Taziyeh/ Ritual and Drama in Iran ed Chelkowski , New York, 1979., p.38.

CHAPTER SIX



From the book of Taziyeh the Treasure of Ritual and Religious Drama ed, Anassori, Jaber Designed by Farhad Narestani.

Chapter Six

Taziyeh Today

A brief study on the revolutionary movements in Iran

The Shi'i't of Iran in matters of religious observance choose to follow a leader who is termed a *Mujtahid* (one who practices religious jurisprudence). The *Mujtahid* is a learned clergyman who is looked to, to provide guidance and direction in affairs not only personal and religious, but also national and political. Historically it is said that *Mirza Muhammad Ali Behbahani*(d.1216/1801) was the first in the line of great *Mujtahids* who have left their distinctive mark on Iranian history down to the present age.

The justification and elaboration by the *Mujtahids* of the principles of *Taqlid*- submission to the directive of the learned in matters of religious law- and *Ijtihad*- the exercise of national authority by the learned in the application of religious law- by him and his successors-has provided the Shi'a community with a continuous living tradition of leadership, strongly influencing its historical development

"The belief of a Muslem in the principles of the faith must be based on a logical proof, and he may not accept anyone's pronouncement without a proof."¹ In matters related to the ordinances (*Ahkam*) of religion, however, he must either be a *mujtahid*, be able to deduce the ordinances according to logical proof or, submit to a *mujtahid*, that is, act according to his instructions.

¹ Quoted Hamid Algar "Religious Forces in Eighteenth and nineteenth- century Iran" Cambridge History of Iran(From Nadir Shah to The Islamic Republic) vol 7 Cambridge University Press 1991., pp.711-713.

"The *Mujtahid* may not claim absolute authority for himself, for the result of *Ijtihad* is never more than *Zann*- a contestable expression of personal opinion- so that *mujtahids* may pronounce different or contradictory rulings on the same matter. Since, however, it is incumbent on the *muqulid* (followers) to choose one *mujtahid* whose directives he will follow, in practice the *mujtahid* comes to enjoy a wide degree of authority. Choice of a *mujtahid*, as source of direction- *marja-i taqlid*- depends primarily upon the observation of a superior degree of learning and piety, such as to inspire confidence in his worthiness."²

Since religious ordinances embrace the political sphere, the function of the *mujtahid* has acquired an important socio-political dimension. As *marja-a taqlid*, the *mujtahid* is liable to dispense guidance on political matters which might possibly be opposed to the will of the state.

Based upon this outline of religious practice let us study the modality of the revolutionary movements, and the political conflict between state and *Ulama*, led by religious authorities, in Iran, from the Kajar period to the end of the Pahlavi dynasty.

The deep and persistent opposition between *Ulama* and state could be seen during the course of reigns of the *Mohammad Shah the Kajar* (1250/1834 - 1264/1848) and *Nasir al din Shah* (1264/1848-1313/1890), in opposition to the forbidding of the use of tobacco by *Mirza Hassan Shirazi* 1309/1891 and in the participation of the *Ulama* in the constitutional revolution.³

² Ibid., pp. 713-714.

³ The preponderant role played by *Ulama* in the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-11, especially in its earlier phases, is well known. The alliance concluded in November 1905 by two leading *mujtahids* of Tehran, Sayed Abd-Allah Bihbahani and Sayed Mohammed Tabatabai, to bring about the overthrow of Ainal-Daula, prime minister of the day, is often considered the starting point of the revolution. The revolution had been preceded moreover, by almost a century of sporadic conflict between leading *ulama* and successive Qajar rulers. Following on the tobacco boycott of 1891-2, *Ulama*- led protests against loans taken from foreign powers and consequent alienation of the Iranian economy became increasingly frequent in the opening years of the 20th century. Ibid., p.732.

"The Kajar period was not only one of great political importance for the *Ulama* , but one in which their participation in the daily affairs of society was marked, the literature flowing from their pens proliferated, and their institutions of learning flourished. The *Ulama* operated a judicial system which in many areas competed with that of the state and their courts were often preferred to the secular jurisdiction as swifter in operations and more just in decision."⁴

Modernisation and Westernisation

The sixteen years of rule by the first Pahlavi can fairly be described as a period of intense hostility to Islamic culture and institutions; what western authors have approvingly called "reform" and "modernization" was experienced by many-if not most- Iranians as a brutal assault on their culture, traditions and identity. Nonetheless, no significant obstacles were placed in the way of Riza Shah by the chief religious authorities as he rose to power. Algar writes: "Riza Shah ,to a great deal, changed the society and its life style on one hand and on the other hand reduced the existing functions of ulama to penury." He adds:

"In addition to all these measures⁵, the religious ceremonies, especially those connected with the commemoration of Imam

⁴ Ibid., pp.715-716.

⁵ In 1928 a law was passed decreeing the abandonment of traditional dress in favour of making Western attire compulsory. Although the ulama were exempt from this, the law stated they had to prove their status by examination (except for recognised mujtahids), thus giving the government the *de facto* power of deciding who was and who was not a member of the ulama. In 1929 government examinations were decreed for the teachers and the *tullab* (students) at the religious colleges... The powers of the ulama were further curtailed in 1931 when strict limits were placed on the *Shar'* courts. Thenceforward, these could only deal with matters of personal status (marriage, divorce, inheritance, etc.) In 1932 the power of registering documents and property titles was also removed from the *Shra'* courts. The final stage of Rida(sic) Shah's attack on the ulama was the Law on Religious Endowments (Awqaf) of 1934... Apart from his direct attack on the ulama, Rida Shah also

Husain's martyrdom at Karbala, were subject to harassment or outright prohibition."...⁶

"...The whole Pahlavi enterprise was, moreover, undergirded with the attempt to create a surrogate, state-sanctioned culture, based on a cult of modernism and ethnic nationalism, that was designed to destroy by attrition the cultural hegemony of Islam in Iran."⁷

The most serious incident in the reign of Riza Shah-that which most closely foreshadowed the events of the attack on the *Faiziya madrasa* in *Qum* in 1963, was the bloody assault on a religious gathering which took place in *Mash-had* in 1935. Algar remarks:

"One of the chief *Ulama* of the city, *Hajj Aqa Husain Qummi* left *Mash-had* with the intention of presenting his grievances, principally concerning the wearing of European-style hats, to Riza Shah in person. He took up residence at Shah Abd Al Azim and soon a flood of people came from Tehran to see him. The house where he was staying was sealed off by police, and *Qummi* found himself a prisoner. When news of his predicament reached *Mash-had*, on 12 July, people gathered in protest at the shrine of *Imam Riza*. Troops entered the shrine, firing indiscriminately, and dispersed the protesters. It happened to be the anniversary of the day in 1912 when Russian troops had fired on the Shrine. Two days later, the well-known preacher *Buhlul* addressed a second protest meeting, at the *Guhar Shad* mosque. Once the gathering was underway, the army closed all gates to the mosque, machine-guns were mounted on its walls, and the troops began firing. The result was the largest single massacre enacted by the Pahlavis, before the events of June 1963."⁸

carried out a number of other measures that were seen as an attack on religion. The use of the veil by women was prohibited in 1936.

See Moojan Momen *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam* New haven and London, Yale University Press, 1985., pp.250-251.

⁶ Quoted Hamid Algar op. cit., p.741-742.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., p.743.

The most important response of the *Ulama* to the policies of Riza Shah was the renewal and development of the religious teaching institution (*Hauza*) in *Qum* by *Shaikh Abd Al Karim Hairi*. *Hairi* remained , however, the indisputable director (*Zaim*) of the entire *Hauza* until his death in 1936, and as such might have provided a focus for religious opposition to Riza Shah. Among *Hairi*'s students were *Imam Ruh allah Khumaini* ⁹(twenty years old) *Ayatullah Sadr Al din Sadr* (d.1954) , *Ayatullah Mohammed Kazim Shariatmadari* (d. 1986), and *Ayatullah Shihab Al di Marashi*. ¹⁰

"In September 1941, Riza Shah was deposed by the Allies. Then Muhammed Riza , his son, was permitted to succeed him. Muhammed Riza Shah during the course of his first period of ruling the country encountered disruptions brought about by the Second World War and the competing interventions in Iran of Britain, the United States and Soviet Union, which give rise to a resurgence of political activity under conditions of relative freedom. The *Ulama* soon began to explore new possibilities: they demanded an end to the ban on Muharram celebrations and to the prohibition of Islamic dress for women. Muhammed Riza Shah, still unsure of himself, assented to these demands."¹¹

⁹ Born in September 1902 (d.1989), in south-west Iranian city of Khumain. Ruh-Allah Khumaini lost his father in the first year of his life, killed by bandits as he was traveling to Arak. He was brought up by his mother and his paternal aunt, a resourceful and strong-willed woman, and then, after both women had died in a single year, by his elder brother, Murtaza. At the age of 19 he joined the circle of Shikh Abd-al Karim Hairi in Arak, whom he promptly followed to Qum the next year. A brilliant scholar from the outset, Khumaini first excelled in *Irfan*, that distinctive Shi'a form of gnosis that led a marginal and sometimes dangerous existence in the religious institution. Most of his early writings were on this topic, and it was also the first subject in which he offered instruction, having as his pupils such close associations as Ayatullah Hasan Ali Muntazari and Ayatullah Murtaza Mutahari (he was killed in 1979 by an opposition group of the Islamic revolution). As teacher and writer, Khumaini later moved on to other concerns, but practical involvement with *Irfan* and the inner life remained an integral part of his personality touching even on his political activity. Ibid., p.751.

¹⁰ See Algar op. cit., pp.743-744.

¹¹ Algar op. cit., pp.744-745.

When the second World War ended and Muhammed Riza determined to stabilise in his power, based on assistance from Western governments and multinational corporations, he started to "reform" the country.¹²

Muhammed Riza encountered the resistance of religio-political opposition movements, and the interference of religious authorities in his policies. For instance the nationalisation of the oil industry was the aim of a co-operative campaign in which *Ayatullah Abul Qasim Kashani* played a decisive role in organising the mass demonstrations of 21 July 1952 that led to the fall of the government of *Qavam al Saltan* and the return of *Musaddiq* to the premiership, with greater public support than before. Besides *Kashani* other activists existed. Among the ulama they were: *Ayatulah Mohammad Taghi Khwansari* (d 1952), Who issued a fatva in support of nationalization the oil industry, *Ayatulah Abul Fazl Zanjani*, loyal to *Musaddiq* and national Front, *Ayatulah Ali Akbar Burqui*. However, amongst the Ulama was *Ayatulah Aqa Hussein Burujirdi*,¹³ (d1961), the supreme religious authority of the period, who was not enthusiastic about political activity.

¹² Quoted John L Esposito The Iranian Revolution Its Global Impact Florida International University Press 1990., p.20.

¹³ "Burujirdi was a man of unusually broad vision. He patronised schools of a modern type, where natural sciences were taught together with Islamic knowledge; sent emissaries to various countries in Africa, Asia and Europe; and instituted friendly contacts with the *Azhar* (University in Egypt) with a view to a Sunni-Shiia rapprochement. However, he was almost unwaveringly quietist in political matters, going so far as to convene a conference of Ulama in February 1949 that sought to ban ulama participation in political activity. Not averse to quiet pressure on the government for limited purposes, he was in occasional touch with the court, both before and after August 1953. His only overt political activity came in the spring of 1955, when he lent his authority to the anti-Bahai campaign of that year, and in February 1960, when he denounced the planned limitation of private agrarian holdings as contrary to Islamic law. On the great political issues of the 1941-1953 period, he remained adamantly silent "

Algar, Hamid op. cit., pp.745-748.

Between 1945 to 1961, alongside all the opposition movements, numerous Islamic Associations were established, led by educational groups. Their overwhelming concern was educational, to present Islam as a religion compatible with modernity, science and rationality and to free it from what their members regarded as superstitions.

"Although the discussion of political topics was forbidden in the associations as a matter of policy, many of their members were active politically in parallel organisations: *The Nahzat-i Muqavamat-i Milli* ("National Resistance Movement"), founded in 1953 by *Ayatullah Talaqani*, and the *Nahzat-i Azadi -i Iran* ("Freedom Movement of Iran") founded in 1961 by *Talaqani - Bazargan* and *Yad-Allah Shahabi*. The latter movement, loosely affiliated to the National Front, was one of the most important oppositional organisations during the 1960s, a fact attested to by the repeated imprisonment of its leadership. Essentially a reformist group, it demanded implementation of the 1907 Constitution and attempted to harmonise Islamic and liberal-nationalist sentiment."¹⁴

The ulama and all other opposition groups were effectively crushed by the Shah in 1963 and the next fourteen years saw a period of what appeared to be relative political calm. The ulama were kept under firm government control and were thus forced into *political quietism*. *Censorship ensured that only religious* works on non-controversial topics could be published and the few ulama who did venture to speak out against the regime such as Ayatu'llah Sayyid Mahmud Talaqani and Ayatu'llah Muhammad Rida(sic) Saidi were immediately dealt with (the latter was tortured to death in 1970). The Shah' secret police, SAVAK, infiltrated religious groups and dealt harshly with any protest.¹⁵

¹⁴ Algar op. cit., p.750.

¹⁵ Moojan, Momen An Introduction to Shi'i Islam London: New Haven Yale University Press, 1985., p.255.

After 1960, *Ayatullah Khumaini* emerged as a key anti-government spokesman. In 1962, the realisation began to dawn that with *Khumaini* a completely new type of religious leadership had become available. *Khumaini* began to speak out from his pulpit in *Qum* expressing uncompromising opposition to absolutism and foreign "rule" or influence.

On 22nd of March 1963 *Khumaini*'s base, in *Faizia Madrasa*, was attacked under assault and the police and army of the Shah made a bloody day similar to the incident of 1935, in the *Guhar Shad mosque* in *Mash-had*. *Khumaini* was arrested and imprisoned. A series of ulama led popular demonstrations in major cities sympathetic to *Khumaini*'s case. After several days of clashes between people and security forces *Khumaini* was released from prison (August 1963). But within a short time he began to speak out again. When Iran's parliament passed legislation granting capitulatory rights to Americans several days before Iran received a huge loan he bitterly declared: "The government has sold our independence, reduced us to the level of a colony, and made the Muslim nation for Iran more backward than savages in the eyes of the world...."¹⁶

Khumaini for the third time was arrested and this time he was sent into exile in Turkey. For about a year he was there - from October 1964-1965. He was then permitted to leave for the more congenial and appropriate destination of *Najaf* in Iraq, which was destined to be his home for thirteen years. From there he was sent to Paris (1978) where his words and image became a frequent feature of the world media. *Khumaini* never stopped his opposition to the Shah and his government. The end of his campaign led the Iranian people towards the Islamic revolution of 1978-79.¹⁷

¹⁶ Quoted in Esposito, John L. op. cit., p.22.

¹⁷ For more information regarding Islamic revolution see Algar, Momen and Esposito.

Algar writes:

"In the revolution of 1978-79, two interrelated features were conspicuous: the vast extent of popular participation in the movement, unparalleled in any other revolutionary upheaval of the 20th century; and its overwhelmingly Islamic nature, in terms of ideology, organisation and leadership. Virtually every city and town in Iran was mobilised against the Pahlavi regime as men and women from almost all classes of Iranian society demonstrated their desire for an end to the monarchical system and the foreign hegemony it was seen to represent."¹⁸

Esposito adds:

"This metahistorical event offered the central sacred story and symbols of oppression and revolt, suffering and martyrdom, and righteous struggle (jihad) against the forces of absolutism and social injustice."¹⁹

Taziyeh after the Islamic Revolution in Iran

The history of the advent and development of Taziyeh in Iran indicates that Taziyeh, as a form of religious or liturgical drama, has very often been involved in political and social struggle. According to *Ibn e Kathir* as early as the *Dialama* dynasty, religious processions held by Shi'its, during Muharram A.H.353/A.D.965 culminated in looting and the killing people of the two factions of Suni and Shi'it.²⁰

¹⁸ Algar op. cit., p.761.

¹⁹ Esposito op. cit., p.21.

²⁰ See chapter two, section b, of this thesis and also Taziyeh/ Ritual Drama in Iran Ed, Chelkowski (Article No:18) "Shiism and Ashura in South Lebanon." pp. 228-235.

During the course of the two kingdoms of Pahlavi, Taziyeh was prohibited and for more than thirty years it was performed in hiding. After this long period of suppression, Taziyeh was redeemed as a traditional form of drama and was sent to the Shiraz Festival of Arts. The Pahlavi regime was well aware that it was not easy to hinder people from holding religious demonstrations during the month of Muharram and Safar, the days of *Tasua* and *Ashura* in particular. Therefore they made a massive effort to watch any such activity carefully. People regardless of the infiltration of police and undercover army agents amongst the mass of demonstrators, held Muharram ceremonies and retained most of the traditions involved in it. Police and secret agents kept a careful watch on the ceremonies lest the religious procession might convert to a political demonstration. This occurred eventually. In 1978-79 vivid examples could be found.

"The year 1978 was a watershed in contemporary Iranian history. Politicised intelligentsia, ulama, student and merchants were galvanised by the brutality of the government's response to a series of political protests from 1977 to September 1978. Although many demonstrations remained peaceful, other protest meetings and strikes turned into riots as people and military clashed with the demonstrators, killing and wounding many."²¹

Peter Chelkowski writes:

"The participants in the Semana Santa procession in Seville, Spain, would certainly not wish to be considered theatrical or even histrionic, the Shiites would not approve of their rituals being regarded as anything but devotional religious practices. On the practical level, however, it is clear that *Muharram* rituals and particularly the processions served as prototypes for massive demonstrations in Tehran and other cities during the recent revolutionary upheavals. In a country where the secret police and the army were very powerful and overt political opposition to the Shah's regime was non-existent, it was possible to bring hundreds of

²¹ Esposito op. cit., p.25.

thousands of demonstrators into the streets by converting *Muharram* processions into mass demonstrations."²²

The demonstration of Muharram 1978 proved that the processions of the months of Muharram and Safar and the performance of Taziyeh , as a traditional and dramatic activity, can not be abolished or restrained, simply by the will of anyone who is in power. As Rebecca Ansary says:" Naturalising the effects of a ten century tradition could not be achieved by mere royal decree."²³

Chelkowski, quoting Beeman, on the traditional performances in Iran writes:

"Iranian traditional performance forms have been able to survive and retain a degree of vitality because they are important to the lives of people who support them; not just as a kind of residual "escape value", but as part of the complex of cultural institutions which provide the meaningful symbolic material helping the public deal with the realities of their own situations..."²⁴

Today Taziyeh is performed at any time , in particular the months of Muharram, Safar and Ramadan , in most cities of Iran. In Tehran the Center of Dramatic Arts, as the state organization, invited Taziyeh groups from different parts of the country to perform Taziyeh using Mehrab Hall as a Tekiyeh. This center, in 1990, established the Department of Taziyeh and Traditional Arts Activities in order to look at traditional arts carefully. This division is trying to

²² Chelkowski, Peter "Shia Muslim Processional Performances" The Drama Review Vol 29 No:3 1985 p.29.

²³ Ansary, Rebecca "The Taziyeh: Ritual Enactment of Persian Renewal" Theatre Journal, Oct 1981 ., pp.47.

²⁴ Chelkowski "Popular entertainment, Media and social change in twentieth-century Iran" The Cambridge History of Iran vol 7, Cambridge University Press, 1991., p.769.

involve Taziyeh experts in order to receive their comments on amending Taziyeh texts for the benefit of publishing them in Theater Quarterly or individual volumes.

Currently Taziyeh activists are not looking for a play-houses as elaborate as the Tekiyeh Dowlat. They do not expect such a place to be built or rebuilt since it is possible to perform a Majlis of Taziyeh wherever they wish.²⁵

Taziyeh does not need a box office since the performance is always free of charge. The performance group of Taziyeh, in the traditional style, is sponsored by well-to-do people or an individual who has pledged support. It is not difficult to find, for instance that every Friday, for more than twenty years, Taziyeh is being performed in the court yard of a house of someone who has made a vow in this respect. This is possible in return for a small payment to Taziyeh group.

After the establishment of the Islamic republic of Iran, Taziyeh, along with the Muharram observances, was free to carry out its activities in public. Taziyeh is known as a passion play and as indigenous drama but while recognising its traditional function as religious observance, there are aspects which are not acceptable, in the view of scholars and ulama in particular. For instance, violent action, gashing oneself with knives or pricking the arms and cheeks with needles and so forth, which were common among some of the demonstrators of Ashura

²⁵ Mehrab Hall is located in a popular area of Tehran or in terms of geographical point of view in the centre of the capital city of Tehran. Because of the convenient location the authorities of The Centre of Dramatic Arts realised that Taziyeh could be performed in this place. Therefore they started to adapt the court yard as a Tekiyeh. The courtyard has been covered by spreading a tarpaulin on the thick steel pillars, sited round the court. In the centre of the courtyard is a square platform of wood which is considered as the curtainless stage, raised about two or three feet. As far as I can remember there is no stairway round the platform. The court yard has only one entrance and exit door. Actors and audiences use this door but there are two or three allocated rooms for actors to prepare in. The audience sit on two sides of the stage. One side is allocated to women and the other side to men. Props are insignificant and humble, ordinary wooden or steel chairs earthen dishes and so forth. The group of musicians sit on the stairs, at the end of the courtyard. Recently they have been using well-made and known melodies broadcast on television and radio.

and which have been strictly prohibited since immediately after the constitutional change. In addition it is strongly believed that Taziyeh manuscripts and the modality of its performances require urgent reconsideration, if Taziyeh wants to play the role of a didactic drama and to seek to reinforce ideological morality, both in religion and politics.

During the first decade of the establishment of the new rule in Iran a new idea was explored by some young Taziyeh activists who had graduated from the Dramatic Arts Faculty of the University of Tehran. *Fayyaz Musavi* amongst them, has combined five Majlises "*The Damascus(Sham) Bazaar*", "*The Martyrdom of Imam Hussein*", "*Abbas*", "*Ali Akbar*" and "*Hurr*" to make a new majlis, or play, with the name of "*The Tradition of The Devotion*" (*Ravayat-e jonon*). This play was performed in *Molavi Hall* in Tehran in 1991. *Musavi* and his group presented a compound performance of Taziyeh style and European staging, paying regard to most traditions of the Taziyeh, particularly the polarity between saints and villains.

Amir Dejakam, another graduate student, attracted by *Musavi's* action, created a new play based upon the majlis of "*Moses and the Desert Dervish*". He performed this play on the stage of *Rudaki Hall* in 1991 in Tehran.

This could be seen as a new step to attract people to the theatre. It should be pointed out that this innovation was also influenced by the growing acquaintance with the European drama which ought to assist activists to develop potential but unrealized dramatic features within the Taziyeh without losing any vital part of the traditions of Taziyeh. Otherwise their efforts will not be accepted by the common people and Taziyeh-goers in particular and the true object-of building a theatre audience and making the Taziyeh a more sophisticated form-will fail.

Religious Criticism of the aberration in the Taziyeh.

(An argument for a purifying of the Taziyeh to make it function more effectively in Iranian society.)

Taziyeh ,since its outset, has been under attack by some religious scholars and historians who were well versed in the circumstances of the history of Islam, particularly of the events of Karbela.

Such confrontations have taken place throughout the established history of the Taziyeh. Near the end of the reign of Nasir Al din Shah (1264-1313. A.D. 1858-1893) some of the religious authorities(ulama) rose up against the performance of Taziyeh in Tekiyeh Dowlat. The head of them at this time was the well known and influential priest *Haj Shikh Dajafar Shushtari*. Once, Nasir al din Shah visited Shushtari at his home , in person, and presented to him a valuable ring as a royal gift. Shikh Shushtari accepted this and wore it but immediately took it off and said: "Now may I ask the Shah to accept this as my gift." The Shah, faced with this kind of reaction, demanded of Shikh Shushtari any request he might wish. Shikh asked Nasir al din Shah to stop the performance of Taziyeh merely because of the aberrations in it.²⁶

The opposition at that time was, as much as anything, concerned with corruptions that had crept into the playing style and conventions of the Taziyeh, vulgarisations arising from the presentation of the Taziyeh alongside crude forms of entertainment in the Tekiyeh Dowlat and influences taken over from this. Among the corruptions criticised at that time were an inclination on the part of performers to stray into forms of identification with character against the traditional forms of

²⁶ Homayouni , Sadegh Taziyeh in Iran Navid press, Shiraz, 1989., p.145.

representation. The portrayal of women by men was particularly singled out as offensive as performers were remarked to be straying into areas of female impersonation that went beyond their function of reciting the words of the person they represented.²⁷

More recently criticism of the Taziyeh has been directed towards a lack of correspondence between the events depicted and the known facts. Some presentation of these facts might help correct the many misconceptions and factual errors which often appear in articles and books published outside Iran, dealing with the performance of Taziyeh.

The tangible event of Karbela is a great sedate social event which affects the temperament, habit and the education of those who believe in it. An attractive happening which without resorting to any compulsory force casts an influence over believers so that they offer their industry and talent, as well as time and money, to remember this respectfully. Hence it might be expected, that on any occasion when the history of Imam Hussein and the event of Karbela are presented, on the day of Ashura, what is represented, is the pure truth, based on what has been handed down to us. Unfortunately the fact is that this event has been subjected to numerous distortions which have occurred, wittingly and unwittingly, and have compromised and subverted the reality of the event of Karbela. As an example let us look at the following specimen. Acknowledging that some license to improvise is a necessary part of the Taziyeh tradition, a line must exist beyond which what might be seen as the result of personal expression of devotion or artistic creativity indicates a plain distortion of the events of Karbela and of Imam Hussein.

One of a member of a group of Taziyeh activists writes:

²⁷ See Baktash, Mayel "Taziyeh and its Philosophy" Taziyeh/ Ritual and Drama in Iran ed. Chelkowski, New York 1979., pp. 108-9.

"For a performance of a Majlis of Taziyeh we set out to one of nearby villages to the city of Shiraz. There we were asked to introduce ourselves and explain what we were going to present. I told them all about our group and the seasonal performances.

"You mean you are able to perform a Majlis of Taziyeh?" The head man of the village asked.

"Yes". I replied.

"If you can not, you should leave the village without delay", the head man said.

"All right we will prove it. Now could you tell us in which Majlis you are interested?", I asked.

"The majlis of the digging Imam Hussein out of snow", the head man said.

We were surprised since as far as we knew there is no such story amongst the written stories of Karbela. We consulted each other in order to find a solution but we had to inform them of the absence of this kind of Majlis.

"There is no such story. The story would not be consistent with the desert of Karbela". I explained.

"You are a liar. I believe Taziyeh activists know how to perform any Majlis which they are asked", the head man said.

We found ourselves up against an unusual demand with no idea how to proceed. At any rate we decided to do something for the sake of their happiness. Therefore we altered a part of the dialogue and a scene of the Majlis of "Selling Water by Imam Hussein"²⁸ and we performed a new version of a Majlis which we called it "digging Imam Hussein out of the snow".

After the show the headman revealed his ecstasy and said: "I knew you were a skilled group of Taziyeh."

Then for our wages(based on the custom) he ordered to be fetched dates , flour, eggs and wheat.

In the end we asked them for the sources of this Majlis. Nobody could answer until one of the villagers said: "Last year my son had fallen down into a deep snow well²⁹so that he was about to die. I vowed that should he be saved from the snow and came back safe and sound I would be a sponsor for the performance of this Taziyeh."³⁰

28 This Majlis is amongst the third type of Taziyeh, namely Gusheh, the story is thus: Imam Hussein at his infancy was kidnapped by a hawker and was ill treated by him. Homayouni, Sadegh Taziyeh and Taziyeh Khani Art Festival , Shiraz, 1976., p.56.

29 It was a custom to make a well to store snow in it during the course of winter days for use in summer times.

30 Homayouni, Sadegh Taziyeh In Iran Shiraz: Navid Publisher, 1989., pp.44-45.

Accusations of distorting historical fact, based upon what late Mortaza Motahari pointed out, may be laid on two groups, the religious preachers or so called Ulama and the laity. The former group as well-informed believers and preachers, the latter group as sincere believers and listeners. The late Mortaza Motahari, one of the well-known religious scholars in Iran, in recent years, elaborately brought this issue to consideration by saying: "The history of Karbela has been distorted by adding unaccounted, untrue events so should we consider collecting them there would be several books running over five hundred pages". He adds:

"The late Haj Mirza Hussein Nori, the teacher of Haj Abbas Ghomi(Qomi) and Late Haj Sheikh Ali Akbar Nahavandi in Mashhad and late Haj Sheikh Mohammed Bagher Birjandi Mohaddess, was a man of extraordinary talents. He was an enthusiastic writer and what he has written shows his loyalty to his faith. Though some of his books have been criticised by contemporary scholars yet, still, they are readable at large. One of his books is on Rauze-Khani which is called Loe Loe and Mirjan. This small but magnificent book sets out the responsibility of those who tell the story of Imam Hussein. The whole book is in two chapters. One is on the purity of the history taking into consideration the role of preachers, or Rodeh Khans. These should stay within telling the truth of the history³¹. He (Haj Nori) has brought some examples and contrasts untrue events against the truth which should prevail.

Haj Mirza Hussein Nori's second chapter is devoted to preachers themselves and he argues that they should not seek, out of ambition, to utilize their skill to arouse passion at the story of Imam Hussain, merely for sake of achieving social rank and fame".³²

A salutary example of how wild the unfettered imagination can run lies in parable quoted in Motahari where:

³¹ Since the beginning of the first and second century Islamic historians have set down the events of Karbela in historical documents. The other medium through which the event of Ashura is preserved is sermons or orations. Sermons have the same functions as official proclamations. Here they would be the ground work for historians and chroniclers. Motahari, Mortaza The Epic of Hussein vol one Sadra Press Tehran, 1991., p.31.

³² Motahari op. cit., pp.18-19.

"it is said a preacher sought to meet Mohammed Ali the son of Vahid Behbahani. At their meeting he described a nightmare in which he had been harrowingly cruel. "Explain that to me". Behbahani asked. The elegist said: "I dreamed that I was severing the flesh of Imam Hussein's body with my teeth".

Behbahani was startled and for a short while thought deeply. "Are you a preacher?" He asked.

"Yes I am." The preacher replied.

"From now on you ought to refrain from preaching unless , necessarily, you draw on authentic sources," Behbahani said, but he added," having said that, through this nightmare you have been advised to stop peddling dubious information to your listeners. Go and present your thanksgiving to God by which you will be forgiven for what you have done so far."³³

In the interest of constructing popular and exciting stories out of the history of Karbela, it has often been easy to ignore the distinction between the real world and an illusory world. The attempt to recreate Karbela's atmosphere, through their orations, leads to a distortion of historical fact. Contributory to this is the custom that decrees that, on any occasion, such as Rodeh Khani and *Taziyeh Gardani*, reference to the Karbela tragedy should be made. In such circumstances it is not easy to say anything original but the pressure to do so is strong.³⁴

33 Motahari op. cit., pp.55-56.

34 Brown E writes:" One of my young Persian friends who, like so many of the rising generation, deplors the influence of the Mullas and Rawze-Khans and the religious atmosphere created by them ,specially in connection with Muharram celebration, admitted to me that at least the work has been done so thoroughly that even most ignorant women and illiterate peasants are perfectly familiar with all the details of these legends of martyrdom, however little they may know of the authentic history of the events portrayed or persons represented. Even the great mujthids, like Mulla Mohammed Baqiri-Majlisi, however, little they might approve the exaggerations and even blasphemies which characterized the Persian plays in their final popular developments, were at great pains to supply their compatriots with popular and easily intelligible religious treatises in Persian, so that a knowledge of these matters might not be confined to Arabic scholars or professed theologians. Brown op. cit., vol. 4 , pp.194-5.

Some more revealing examples of the distortions of history follow: It is said:

"One day while Ali (peace be upon him) was preaching, Imam Hussein said to him 'I am thirsty'. 'I want water'. Ali addressed the gathered people and asked for a volunteer to fetch water for his beloved son Hussein. *Abulfazl al Abbas* who was amongst people offered to go. He went home and asked his mother to prepare a glass of water for Hussein. In returning, as he was carrying the glass of water, he had to pass through a narrow passage which was blocked by masses of people. Therefore he was not able to carry the glass properly and the water spilled. When Ali (A.S) saw the scene he was saddened and moved to tears. When Ali (A.S) was asked to explain the reason for his crying, he said: "This scene reminded me of the scene of the *Ashura*". Afterwards the preacher points the relevance to the martyrdom of Imam Hussein in the desert of Karbela.³⁵

Here, Motahari pointed out that Ali (peace be upon him) preached during the course of his caliphate, not before. At that time Imam Hussein was thirty three years of age and it is too far-fetched to believe such behaviour of him. Having said that, this story is not based on any acceptable truth. In the didactic form of the Taziyeh historical and religious stories are used comparatively to place the events of Karbela in a traditional context and to heighten the significance of Karbela. Here the comparison is wildly overstretched metaphorically and the effect risks bathos.

Historians have never attested the presence of *Lila*, the mother of *Ali Akbar*, on the plain of Karbela. Nonetheless the story of *Lila*, namely the presence of Lila in the day of the tragedy of Ashura, amongst *Rodeh Khans* and preachers, is persistent and still current. There exists a different version of the actual history of Karbela and the story of Lila and Ali Akbar. Motahari writes:

"In Qom, in a *Rodeh Khani* meeting, the preacher said: When Ali Akbar was repairing to the battle field he said to his mother: 'I have heard from my ancestor that the praying of mothers for their

³⁵ Motahari op. cit., p.23.

children will be answered. Go into the tent and, in private, while you make your hair dishevelled, pray for me. I know your prayer will be granted. Be it so, and I will come back safe and sound.'

It has been said, Lila the mother of Ali Akbar went to her tent and did so. She asked God, should Ali Akbar come back, she would sow the basil seed between the gulf of Karbela and Medina, namely three hundred kilo-meters"³⁶.

The absurdity of this requires no refutation. Motahari, quoting Haj Nori, continues:

"At the climax of the day of Ashura, on which one by one Imam Hussein's companions were put to death, it has been said that the Imam ordered the preparation of a wedding ceremony for Kassem(Qassem), the son of Imam Hassan, with his daughter. Since this was his brother's wish and his own as well then the wedding, because of that, must be performed."³⁷

The story of the wedding of Kassem is entirely apocryphal and has no basis in history. Nevertheless this is one of the most pervasive fictions and the story appears, with the others created above, in dramatised form in any Taziyeh. The elaborations of the preachers have found further extension in the dramatic form.

Husain: Oh! Thou dost aggravate the pain of my broken heart with this thy saying; thou dost remind me suddenly of Husan's will. Thy father, the green flower of the garden of faith, when on the point of death, desired that at a certain period I must have his Kasim married to my daughter, in order that mirth and mourning should be my fate.

Kasim: O dear uncle, make me not lose patience by talking to me of marriage; speak of offering sacrifices, please, and not of nuptial affairs. What room is left for joyous feasts now that Ali Akbar is gone from the world? It is preferable to wallow in one's own blood than to marry after such a calamity.

36 Motahari op. cit., pp.25-26.

37 Motahari op. cit., pp.27-28.

Husain: Seeing that my brother has requested it,
I cannot but obey his order.
Thou needst not shed tears from thine eyes.
I myself will decorate the marriage-bed for thee.
.....

(On one hand they bring Kásim's marriage-couch, well decorated, and on the other hand a similar bed, covered with black to signify Ali Akbar's misfortune, which Umme Lailah and Sukainah mourn over the slain)."³⁸

The nature of this event proves this story totally unbelievable. Motahari writes:

"I ferret to find , at least , a minor reference to throw light on the marriage of Kasem. Amongst available sources I found no evidence of such a happening. This absurd story has never been separated from the Taziyeh whereas it can not be possible to justify the story in reality. Kashefi was the first writer who suggested it in his book (The Garden of Martyrs)."³⁹

This well known book full of imaginary stories, was read by Rodeh Khans as a religious source. However, since this book is the first book of elegies in Persian it was widely read by the priesthood.⁴⁰

Rebecca Ansary based on the translation of the marriage of Kassem by Pelly (from which the quoted extract comes) remarks:

"This is the only instance in the entire cycle where history has been manipulated to serve the ends of the ritual drama. (naturally the entire story narrated by this cycle reflects the Shiyah version of the historical events.) Although Fatemeh was not present at Karbela,

38 Pelly op. cit., p.5ff.

39 Motahari op. cit., p.28.

40 See Shearani, Abolhassan (ed) Roth al Shohada Islamieh Press Tehran, 1970., p.3.

her marriage with Kassem has been a stable element of the mourning rituals from a very early period."⁴¹

Motahari, quoting Haj Nori, writes:

"Stories such as the wedding of Kassem were for the first time presented in this book(The Garden of Martyrs). I assumed that merely one or two samples of this kind of worthless stories had been set out but when I read it through again I encountered numerous of them"⁴².

Whilst talking to Taybi Jazayri, one of the learned priests in south of Iran, I asked about these various events and the wedding of Kassem ceremony , in particular. He said: "These cases can not be authenticated in any authoritative books or religious tracts. Therefore, necessarily, they must be accepted as untrue".

An example of how the popular tradition set down in The Garden of Martyrs has been transposed into the Taziyeh can be seen by setting Jalal Asgar against Pelly's translation of one of the texts. Asgar gives us:

"One tradition declares that as Husain left Mecca in the direction of Medina, several Angels, equipped with war weapons and riding 'Heavenly Horses', came to help Husain. They informed Husain that they have come to assist him by the order of the Almighty. But he rejected their protection. Then a group of pious Jinn's came to him and asked him to order them to destroy whatever number of enemies Husain might have. But Husain told them that according to the Holy Book , the Koran, everyone should follow his predestined fate.

How could he act against the will of Allah, who had told him, and made it known to all the Prophets, that he must be Martyred in the Desert of Karbala."⁴³

41 Rebecca Ansary op. cit., p.348.

42 Motahari op. cit., p.53.

43 Asgar, Jalal p.111.

The following is an extract from the Majlis of Martyrdom of Hussein the scene of Ja'far:

Ja'far: O Lord of men and Jinns, I am the least of thy servants, and my name is Ja'far, the chief ruler of all the tribes of Jinns. To day, while I was setting on the glorious throne of my majesty, easy in mind, without any sad idea or thought whatever, I suddenly heard thy voice, when thou didst sadly implore assistance; and on hearing thee I lost my patience and senses. And, behold, I have come out with troops of Jinns of various abilities and qualifications, to lend thee help if necessary.

Husain: In the old abbey of this perishable kingdom, none can ever, O Ja'far, attain to immortality. What can I do with the empire of the world, or its tempting glories, after my dear ones have all died and gone? Is it proper that I, an old man, should live, and Akbar, a blooming youth, die in the prime of age? Return thou, Ja'far, to thy home, and weep for me as much as thou canst.

Ja'far: Alas for Husain's exile and helplessness! Alas for his continual groans and sighs!

Husain : (coming back from the field, dismounts his horse, and making a heap of dust, lays his head on it) O earth of Karbala, do thou assist me, I pray! since I have no mother, be thou to me instead of one.⁴⁴

Set down as baldly as Asgar has it, the story seems just an amusing, fictitious anecdote. In the Majlis, the purpose of the fiction (obviously for the popular preacher as well as the Majlis derived from his preaching) can be discerned. It is difficult not to feel deep pity for the Imam and the exchanges with Ja'far are clearly there to provide an opportunity for heightening the pathos in the Karbela story. Even allowing that Pelly's translation draws comparison with the popular English translation of melodrama, alive in the period when he was

44 Pelly op. cit., p.100.

working, there is still a strong sense in the dramatisation of exploiting the situation for easy and immediate emotional responses from the listeners/audience.

Further examples of over-dramatisation draw quite clearly on the heroic tradition of the Iranian epic, which we examined when looking for the origins of the Taziyeh. Instead of exploiting or trying to enhance the pathos of Karbela, these fictions seek to enhance the heroic stature of historical figures clustered round the incidents of the martyrdom. The Imam Hussein, Ali (A.S) and others are all treated in this way.

Shi'ites, on the bravery of Ali (A.S.), have made numerous legends, stories and mythical analogies. For instance, it is narrated: "At the battle of Khaibar, Ali halved his adversary Marhab with a blow of his sword". In the continuation of this story it is added that forthwith, Gabriel was sent to the place in which the battle took place in order to protect the earth, since if Ali's sword came down with full force it might split the earth. Gabriel obeyed but in the course of the event one of his wings was wounded so that he had to dress it, in consequence of which he could not return to the heaven for a period of forty days and nights. When he arrived at heaven he was asked where has been for this time. He reported all that happened.

In other version it is said : "When Ali drew his sword Marhab did not feel the strike and said to Ali: "Was that all your strength!" "Move if you like", Ali replied. When Marhab did so he split in half".⁴⁵

"Some pictures of Ali (A.S.) in the light of his bravery and prowess have also been drawn in which the character of Ali is strange indeed. For example Ali is pictured as an athletic man holding a two-edged sword in hand⁴⁶. In these kinds of pictures

⁴⁵ Motahari op. cit., pp. 43-44.

⁴⁶ Zolfaghar (Zul Fakar) is the name of the famous two-edged sword of Imam Ali.

what is forgotten is Ali's righteousness, the one who prayed and asked for forgiveness every day and night. By and large the first shows a countenance which can never show the quality of a sage, a judge or a literary man."⁴⁷

Molah Agha Darbandi in his book Asrar al Shahdah (The Mystery of Martyrs) writes:

"The army of Amr Ibn Sâd at the battle of Karbela were a million and seven hundred thousand fighters against Imam Husain yet Husain could fight and killed three hundred thousand of the army of the enemy. Abulfazl also killed twenty five thousand people of this army."⁴⁸

Motahari endorses the criticism by the writer of the book of Loe Loe and Marjan regarding the story of Abulfazl Al Abbas which amongst narrators runs thus:" At the battle of Saffien, should Abulfazl al Abbas have taken part , seeing that he was only ten years of age, he over-threw eighty adversaries one by one. When the first one fell he was halved by Abbas. All seventy nine rest faced the same consequence".

Even those not nominally of the Imam's party are accorded acknowledgment of great virtue:

"It is said Ibn-e Ziad offered fifty tons of gold to Ibn Sâd to take part in the battle of Karbela".⁴⁹ If tempted to this extent, could Ibn Sâd have ignored it?

Motahari himself attested this and refers readers to the authentic sources. While he encourages activists, those who feel themselves obligated to preserve and commemorate the event, he urges them restrict themselves to authentic information

⁴⁷ Motahari op. cit., p.97.

⁴⁸ Motahari op. cit., pp.44-45.

⁴⁹ Motahari op. cit., p.105.

on this subject matter. He recommends the books of authors such as *Sheikh Mofid* [under the title of *Ershad*] , *Tabari* , *Ebne Assir*, *Ebne Asaker* and *Kharazmi*. He strictly denies all that has been rendered in *The Garden of Martyrs* and believes that the story of Karbela should be kept quite separate from satirical matters. He gives , in this respect, another example.

The book of *The Garden of Martyrs* and the later one ,the book of *Asrar Al Shahadah* (*The Mystery of Martyrs*) inspire pity for the history of Islam.⁵⁰

The inclination to make myths and legends , amongst the Iranian nation, is the main cause of the distortions in the story of Karbela. Here Motahari says: "that legendary interpolations of this kind harm the basis of religions ."⁵¹

Most religious scholars believe that should Imam Hussein appear to this world again he would say: "The nature of the event of Karbela has been entirely altered. I was not this Hussein which you have conceived. *Kassem was not same* as yours. Your Ali Akbar is not my learned and generous Ali Akbar. All those adherents which you have introduced are not my loyal and devoted companions."

⁵⁰ Motahari op.cit., pp.54-55.

⁵¹ Looking at the following example shows the depth of belief in sacred persons. "About two hundred years ago a thorn picker in a part of the desert of Qazvin(Ghazvin) found a metal sword. He picked it up and on his return to the town gave it to an ironsmith. The ironsmith put this sword into the forge. After a short while astonishingly he learned that the effect of the heat of the forge upon the metal of the sword was nothing. He put it aside in his smithy. One day Haj.Mirza Mohammed Taghi Shahidi Mojtahed, the Imam of Friday prayer, was passing there . The ironsmith presented the sword to him and asked about the mystery and quality of the metal. Haj Mirza took the sword and examined it. He found two names of Imam Hassan and Imam Hussein which were engraved upon this sword. Then Haj Mirza bought it from the ironsmith. Since then this sword has been changing hands among Haj Mirz' offspring. However, since this sword has been ascribed to Imam Hassan and Imam Hussein, or one of their apostles, it has been realised as sacred and every year on the day of Ashura people come to see it. For this reason also this sword is put into a bowl of water in order to make a curative medicine. It is fair to add that it is believed that this water has been the healing and undoing to some patients." An interview made by Reza Alemohamed with Mr Shahidi Mujtahed in Qazvin.,1985.

Motahari believed that the memory of the Imam Hussein was sacred to all Shi'te Muslims and he emphasised the importance for them of continuing to pay tribute to the martyrs of the massacre. He called for great caution to be exercised in the representation of these events and pointed out that it was not possible to depart from the historical and religious truth in the portrayal of the events without inevitably damaging the strength of the devotional act of faith. The evocation of sadness and the moving of people to tears by the portrayal of the terrible sufferings of the martyrs is bound to be debased when the vehicle employed is characterised by men wearing women's clothing⁵² or contains events, such as the Marriage of Kassem, which have no basis in historical truth. Nothing in the life of the Imam Hussein could lead us to presume that such conduct would meet with his approval. The dignity and true suffering of the Imam and those who suffered with him at Karbela is compromised and tainted if they are not accorded a worthy death.⁵³

The majority of believers in the tragedy of Imam Hussein manifestly conceive that the remembrance of this tragedy demands self-denial, compassion and mourning. If this occurs it should provoke a sacred feeling in the path of the sacred one, which is desirable. So all wailing, crying and the induction of a plaintive mood is justifiable and will be rewarded. But any dilution of the truth embodied in the tragedy of Karbela must, inevitably, cheapen and degrade the empathatic response evoked.

Establishing the historical and orthodox truth of the Karbela massacre leads immediately to the question of its portrayal in the Taziye. Distortions and

⁵² It is said that the prophet Mohammed has cursed men who imitate women. Moreh Shmuel Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature in the Medieval Arab World 1991. p 26. Moreh's discussion on this case could be found in this book.

⁵³ Motahari op. cit., p.49.

questionable practices in constructing majlis have led to a gradual decline in the eyes of religious scholars and have also hampered development of the form.

There are instances where the fictional elements introduced into the story of Karbela seem to work against their intended purpose. The Majlis of Rescue by Hussein of Sultan Ghiyas from the Jaws of a Lion , the scene of Lion, is so exaggerated that it constantly trembles on the edge of tipping pathos into bathos:

The Lion: O beneficent king , what are my duties? What am I to do?

I am much Grieved and sorrowful for thee. Permit me to proceed to Karbala. I shall commence to war with thy opponents, and throw my head like a ball at the feet of Zul Janah.

The Imam: O lion, I am weary of life! Thy potion in not to war. Thou canst not become a martyr, nor is thy forest along the banks of a river.

Go now where thou mayest find security, for to be slain in the cause of God is my work.

The Lion: May I be a sacrifice for thee, O thou elect of God!

If thou hast any task, please command me.

As thou art always kind and generous, give me such work as thou knowest

I should do.

The Imam: Come near to me, O lion, for I am distressed with grief. Listen, as I have a request to make. When my enemies have separated my head from my body, they will proceed to trample my body under the hoofs of horses. On my sister Zainab hearing of this circumstance, her bosom will be rent with cries, and her head covered with dust. Know that she will send after you for aid. When she seeks thy assistance, delay not in proceeding towards Karbala for the protection of the slain bodies.

The Lion: May I be thy sacrifice! how much soever thou mayest be in distress; tell me, O king of the just, how am I to distinguish the offspring of Ahmad among the many slain that I shall find in

Karbala? Pray therefore, O holy saint, lay me under an obligation,
and show me now the dead bodies of thy friends.⁵⁴

In the following account of Hussein's departure from Mecca the attempt to accord Hussein with the accoutrements of grandeur and splendour simply detracts from the pathos which is present in the historical account. If we set the fictitious story of Hussein's departure against the record of the Koran, the elaboration deliberately subverts the reality. Motahari remarks:

"Preachers have said: 'A messenger had a letter for Imam Hussein. When the messenger was going to deliver it he learned that Imam Hussein was leaving the city. The messenger went to the place where Imam Hussein and his family were making their departure.

It is said the messenger saw Imam sat with pomp upon a silver weaver chair on an adorned camel litter. The family of Imam were also mounted on camels with poise and dignity.'

Preachers have continued in this vein and when they have come to the tenth of Muharram, the day of Ashura, they have said: 'Now look at Imam's body, how he has become beheaded. Look at his family how they have been captured. Where is that pomp and grandeur?' "⁵⁵

Haj Nori writes:

"This story is nonsense. The true history of Imam Hussein's departure, from the city, is set down in the Qoran(Koran):

He therefore got away therefrom
Looking about, in a state
Of fear. He prayed:
"O my Lord! Save me
From people given to wrong-doing"⁵⁶.

54 Pelly op. cit., pp.58-60.

55 Motahari op. cit p.24.

56 Verse 21 Sura(Surah)xxviii Qasas.

He likened his departure to that of Moses leaving Pharaoh.

Then, when he turned his face
Towards (the land of) Madyan,
He said " I do hope
That my Lord will show me
The smooth and straight Path.⁵⁷

Whilst it is difficult to expunge traditional stories which have been built into the minds and memories of people during the course of centuries, the event of Ashura, itself, indisputably, an historical incident, is the one reliable happening. As such it deserves to be respected by dramatists, in all its dimensions, as the irreducible core of all dramatisations.

The spread of the mechanical media in the twentieth century has vastly increased the production and transmission of fictional, heroic accounts of historical figures and it is against this background that any criticism of the process has to fight to be heard. So far, in Iran, no attempt has yet been made to exploit sacred figures in this way, but the temptation must clearly be there and the traditional use of spurious anecdotes purporting to relate to revered figures, provides a powerful and harmful precedent.

Jalal Asgar in his thesis in the section on the development of legend remarks:

"Three elements have been emphasised throughout the development of Muharram legends- namely the creation of the most tragic location, the most tragic time and finally the most tragic character.

First; the location of Karbala has been known as a predestined place for martyrdom of Husain. There has been a conscious effort to make the desert of Karbala a location known throughout the history by Prophets as a place where Husain's blood was to be shed for the purpose of redemption.

Second; the legends have tried to designate that time for the event which by its own nature heightens the tragedy. The month of

Muharram is called al- Harram, meaning forbidden. No war should be fought in this month, unless the enemy attacks. Thus, the killing of Husain in Muharram intensified the tragedy, for, of all the months, this is the one in which no such martyrdom should have occurred.

The third is on the character of Husain".⁵⁸

In order to show legendary development of Hussein's character Asgar refers us to twenty two points which shows the common pattern of mythical heroes suggested by Lord Raglan.⁵⁹ Jalal Asgar himself compares and maintains his study in the light of the legendary character of Imam Hussein based upon Raglan's patterns. He also gives us several examples regarding supernatural patterns on the event of Karbala.

In the following excerpt, Salman Ghaffary finds a portrayal of events which accords with the historical and pious view of Karbela. Imam Hussein is seen seeking from his enemies some water to ease the suffering of his family:

Husain: O noble standard-bearer of Husain, thou light of my two eyes, O thou who art the strength of my arm, and dearer to me than my very soul, take a skin with thee and go to the field of battle, saying to the enemy, " Thus saith Husain, with a burning heart, 'Is it proper that the Euphrates, a river like the sea, should be forbidden us? Is not this very water part of the dowry of Zahra my mother? By our Lord, my poor, unfortunate family have committed no crime in the world, nor are they of the enemies of God and his Messenger. Kindly, then, grant us a few drops of that water of which even the

⁵⁸ See Asgar, Jalal op. cit, pp.96-99.

⁵⁹ See Raglan, Fitz Roy Richard Somerset The Hero (New York: Oxford University Press , 1937) pp.179-180.

wild beasts of the desert always freely partake!' (Majlis of the Death of Abbas)⁶⁰

"Hussein prized Islam, the religion of his grandfather and the Quran over his own life. He sacrificed himself for the sake of Islam and the Quran. To him it was better to die without water than to live without honour. He preferred to have his head on his enemy's spears and offered his blood to be spilt by the enemy's sword rather than bow his head before a tyrant and ungodly people. He established the truth and won an everlasting Victory over Falsehood".⁶¹

The tragedy of Karbela, is the most *passion-arousing incident, among all* others, in the Shi'ite faith. It embodies such dramatic potentialities that it needs no embellishments. It has impressed religious commentators as a tragedy in its own right and structure and, indeed, Motahari made the remark that "it is as though Imam Hussein had purposely set out to construct the historical scene as a tragic play."⁶²

More than others Motahari has argued, on the basis of his scholarship, for the dramatic values embodied in the event. In trying to determine its aesthetic significance for art and drama, he has pointed to the roots of any artistic activity in the Koran.

"The Koran, as an artistic and uniquely eloquent work, sets out most of that which should be studied and followed by the faithful."⁶³

⁶⁰ Pelly op. cit., pp.20-21.

⁶¹ Ghaffary, Salman op. cit., p.119.

⁶² Motahari op. cit., pp.230-231.

⁶³ Motahari op. cit., PP.290-292.

In this it is obvious that Motahri is of the opinion that the actions of the Imam Hussein were determined by the Koran, and not only those of the Imam but of all the prophets from Adam, the first, to Mohammed. Here Motahari tried to construct an elaborate bridge between what lay behind the nature of those who were involved in the desert of Karbela and the thought embodied in and promulgated by the Koran. The event of Karbela is foreshadowed and implied in verse 111 of the Surah Tobah.⁶⁴

God hath purchased of the
believers.
Their persons and their goods;
Is(sic) the Garden (of Paradise)
They fight in his Cause.
And slay and are slain:
A promise binding on him
In truth, through the Law,
The Gospel, and the Quran:
And who is more faithful
To his Covenant than God?
Then rejoice in the bargain
Which ye have concluded
That is the achievement supreme,⁶⁵

The Koran contains many narratives in addition to other forms of instructive teaching. Many of them preserve the memories of the teachings and actions of the prophets against the ill-treatment and injustice meted out by Kings,

⁶⁴ "The same religion has he established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah, the which we have sent by inspiration to thee, and which we enjoined on Abraham, Moses and Jesus, namely, that he should remain steadfast in the religion, and make no divisions therein. To those who worship other than God, hard is the way to which you call them. God chooses to Himself those whom He pleases, and guides to Himself those who turn to Him." Al- Quran 42:13)

See The Creation of Arts In the Koran By Seyyed Ghotb. Translated into Persian by Mehdi Foladvand Tehran Bonyade Koran Publisher, 1980.

⁶⁵ Surah Tauba(repentance or Baraat immunity) verse 111
From the translation of Yousof Ali p474.

Emperors and other oppressors. Others set down precepts for the just and true believer. Here are two verses from the Koran which instance this.

120- Abraham was indeed a model,
Devoutly obedient to God,
(And) true in faith, and he
Joined not gods with God.⁶⁶

4- Truly Pharaoh⁶⁷ elated himself
In the land and broke up
Its people into sections,
Depressing a small group,
Among them; their sons he slew,
But he kept alive their females;
For he was indeed
A maker of mischief⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Surah Nahl p688 Yusof, Ali.

Ibrahim(Abraham) in the Koran:

Abraham, fulfilled God., Commands, ii 128; and Kaba,ii 125-126; iii.96,97; religion of,ii.130,135; not Jew or Christian,iii 67; nor Pagan, iii 95; rejects worship of heavenly bodieds, vi 75-79; argues with sceptic,ii 258; argues with his father against idolatry, vi 74;xix 41-50, argues with his people against idols, xxi 51-71; xxvi 70-82; xxix 16-18,24-25; xxxvii 83-98; on life to the dead; ii 260; preaches to his people, vi. 80-83; prays for father,ix.113-114; xxvi 86; sacrifice of son, xxxvii 99-111; angels visit him to announce son, xi 69-73;xv 51-56; li, 24-30. pleads for Lut's people,xi 74-76; his prayer. xiv-35-41; xxvi 83-87; a model, xvi 120-123; safe in the fire xxi.69; Book of liii. lxxxvii. 19; his example in dealing with Unbelievers lx. 4-6. Yusof Ali op. cit., Appendix p.1815.

⁶⁷ Pharaoh, Cruelty, ii 49; drowned ii 50; people of liv 41-42; dealing with Moses, vii 103-137; x 75-92; body saved, on account of repentance, x. 90-92; denies God, xxviii 38; lxxix24; a man from his People confesses Faith, xi 28-44 arrogant to the Israelites, xliv 17-33; wife righteous, lxvi,ii; sin and disobedience, lxix. 9; lxxiii 16; lxxxv.17-20; lxxxix 10-14. Ibid., p.1850.

⁶⁸ Surah Qasas Yusof Ali's (translator) The Holy Quran Birmingham: Published by Islamic Propagation Centre International., 1946., p.1002.

On Moses; Moses and his people, ii 51-61; advise Israelites, v 23-29; guided by God, vi 84; and Pharaoh, vii 133-137; x75-92; xi 96-99; xvii, 101-103; xx 42-53, 56-79 xxiii. 45-49; xxv. 35-36; xxvi 10-69; xxviii 4-21, 31-42; xl 23-46; xliii 45-56; li 38-40; lxxix 15-26; resists idol worship, vii-138-141; sees the Glory on the Mount, vii 142-145; reproves his people for calf worship, and prays for them,vii 148-156; his people, vii 159-162 his Book, doubts and differences,'xi 110;

The Koran ,in its teaching also prohibits scribes from reversing or distorting any fact or truth and dictates:

Those who conceal
The clear(signs) we have
Sent down, and the Guidance;
After we have made it
Clear for the people
In the book - on them
Shall be God's curse
And curse of those
Entitled to curse.⁶⁹

To be fair, the substantial passion which the event of Karbela arouses has led story-tellers and Majlis writers instinctively to exaggerate certain features of the tragedy of Ashura, to create an idealised version of the Imam Hussein only loosely based on fact. Perhaps these activists should not be too harshly reproached since, apparently, it is their excessive zeal and respect towards Imam Hussein which has persuaded them to utilize any pragmatic approach to stimulate the feelings and compassion of people gathered to pay homage to Imam Hussein. It could be argued that distorted history has been created for the best of intentions. Though,

to teach his people gratitude, xiv, 58;nine clear signs, vii 133; ; xvii 101;
to the junction of the two seas, xviii 60-82;
his call, xix 51-53; xx9-56; xxviii 29-35
his childhood, mother, and sister, xx38-40; xxviii, 7-13; converts Egyptian magicians, xx 70-73; xxvi 46-52;
indignant at calf- worship,xx 86-98;
and the mystic Fire, xxvii 7-14 xxviii-29-53;
his mishap in the City xxviii 14-21;
in Maydyan, xxviii 22-28;
guided to straight way, xxxvii 114-122;
Books of, liii 36; lxxxvii. 19
vexed by his people lxi.5.
Yusof Ali op. cit., Appendix p.p.1845-6.
In the same way other Prophets such as, Noah, Jesus and Mohammed, have been listed in this appendix mentioned in the Quran.

⁶⁹ Surah Baghreh Verse 159 Yusof Ali p.63.

in doing so, it has harmed the truth of the actual history of Imam Hussein and alienated many religious authorities. Motahari writes:

"I can remember when I was child in our local area, Fariman, there existed an everlasting discussion upon Taziyeh between my father and Taziyeh activists. My father believed that what was shown opposed the truth of the history of Imam Hussein and was unlawful action".

He adds:

"In Qom some time before Muharram, Ayatolah Brujirdi (1871-1961), may God be pleased with him, invited the chiefs of all Taziyeh groups to his house. There he asked them: *"who is your religious authority?"* "You are." They replied. "If you are following my judgment it is opposed to this performance of Taziyeh. I am telling you that Taziyeh in its common form and content is unlawful," Ayatolah Brujirdi said.

"We are your followers for all the year, except these fourteen days of Muharram," they impetuously replied, and left Ayatolah Brujirdi's house."⁷⁰

Motahari, in this century, was a religious scholar who was familiar with the twentieth-century's communications systems. In this knowledge he asked Taziyeh activists to refine their work and to purify it of the distortions which had become common practice. He asked this not from any opposition to the Taziyeh but from his recognition of its dramatic potential. Motahari offered three moral qualities as possible themes for the drama, magnanimity, sacrifice and fidelity, all of which can be extracted from the paths of reality and truth. For the Taziyeh to achieve its potential, an invincible hero must be personified. One, such as Hussein, who saw how his sons were beheaded and their bodies were mutilated. The one whose parched lips spoke of his resistance. The one whose eyes lifted to the skies

⁷⁰ Motahari op. cit., pp.213-214.

(heaven) when his family were captured. The one who, facing extinction, never surrendered to the forces of cruelty and injustice who had determined on his end.

In mixing aspects of pure entertainment and historical distortions and fantasies with sacred intentions and functions, the Taziyeh has departed from its original purpose, that of the commemoration of religious heroes. It has also been inhibited in its development as drama and has been assigned by critical opinion to the status of a folk survival and oddity. In the current situation in Iran it is legitimate to ask in what role and how fully the Taziyeh can participate in the post-revolutionary society.

In the multi-cultural land of Iran the majority of Iranian people take part in the ceremony of the commemoration of Imam Hussein and his family and friends. Different classes of people in the Iranian society know the days of Tasua and Ashura are the days of integration and union in which people can show their sincere fidelity and pure respect towards the Prophet Mohammed and his family in a most lofty manner, in this case the Imam Hussein in particular.

Ayatullah Khomeini during the course of the Islamic revaluation, in the climax of our time, which was coincident with the month of Muharram 1978 addressed to Iranian people: "All days are Ashura and every-where is Karbela." It is obvious that he meant that while Iranian people remember Imam Hussein they should endeavour to preserve the morale of alliance and unity throughout the whole days of each year. The history of the revolutionary movements in Iran, Islamic revaluation in particular, proves how much the success of the last constitutional movement owes to the Muharram ceremony. Hence, for the post-revolutionary Iran, the mourning ceremony for Imam Hussein and all its derivations, yet again, has remarkably found a great degree of importance and respect. After the re-establishment of Islamic rule in Iran, religious observances were revitalised. The present Islamic government both appreciates and supports all

devotions made by masses on any processional occasions. At the same time Taziyeh, separated from the religious procession, has found more independence and may be performed at any time outside of Muharram and Safar. Limited Taziyeh groups have been faced with more demands. Up to now the artistic form and the quality of performance styles and techniques of Majlises of Taziyeh have not been taught in schools or drama sections of universities. The only part of Taziyeh which is being taught is the history of the Taziyeh. Therefore there is yet much work to be done and a shortage of players and directors to meet a huge demand.

To-day Taziyeh, combining in its form the mythical, legendary, literary and, most significantly the religious heritage of Iran, has a role to play as the bearer of the cultural, *ethnical* and *religious values of its land*.

In this context it is natural that Taziyeh, in post-revolutionary Iran, has attracted critical attention and debate from religious men, dramatists and activists in this area for the first time in thirty years. Out of this debate the precise role of Taziyeh in the future and its sphere of influence will be determined. In this respect the most important aspect would seem to be how Taziyeh can remain active, keeping its traditions alive on the one hand and on the other hand how Taziyeh might be the source of a new national drama in Iran.

Taziyeh in this post-revolutionary time ,as a whole, its texts and types, needs this reconsideration. The long period of the Kajar and Pahlavi dynasties extended and accelerated the corruptions and exaggerations which had been accreting around the true core of the Taziyeh throughout its time as a fully developed dramatic form. It is inappropriate that the ceremonies and memorials for the death of Imam Hussein, whose life, actions and memory are so sacred to the Iranian people, should be used as a vehicle for satire or low comedy. One aspect of the Kajar regime, which I have not detailed here, was the importation of the

comedy of Moliere, as an ideal representative of Western culture, suited to develop the Taziyeh into a twentieth-century dramatic entertainment.⁷¹ The meeting of Iranian folk-comedy and classical European comedy produced nothing of lasting dramatic value, but seriously harmed the development of the Taziyeh. The coming years will see much greater interference and intrusion from western dramatic forms. While it would be of no religious or social use to freeze the Taziyeh in time, as an archeological relic, the imminent arrival of these forms makes the present time crucial for the examination of the tradition and the formulation of new possible paths for development.

This study has shown several affinities with aspects of western theatre and it is possible that these may be strengthened as a positive way to resist the national drama from being swamped. It may be possible that the purification of the Taziyeh and its development along lines which bring it more into line with the needs of a post-revolutionary, Islamic society might go hand in hand with the growth of a new drama, maintaining the traditional bases, forms and conventions, whilst falling more in line with the present patterns of world drama. The concern with the balance of tradition and innovation is not the present concern of the Iranian theatre and society alone.

As a first important step towards resolving these pressing matters, at the eleventh Fajr Theatre Festival 6th-12th Feb 1993, in Tehran, the first symposium was held, during the Islamic rule, given over to the study of Taziyeh in all its dimensions. This symposium brought together a new grouping of those who have carried out research on Taziyeh. The most of them were dramatists and activists in this area. During the period of five days more than twenty papers were given.

⁷¹ My colleague in Tehran Mr Nasser Aghai, is at present researching this important area of Iranian Theatre history. The importation of Moliere as a model occurs contemporary with the building of the Tekiyeh Dowlat as an imitation of the Royal Albert Hall.

Alongside these speeches some scenes of selected Majlisis of Taziye were performed by experienced actors. These selections were presented because of their dramatic capacity in comparison with what has been generally on offer to-date. The proceedings of the symposium have been published in the form of a three volume book edited by Jaber Annasori.

More than one symposium must be held to use all industry and knowledge to purify the Taziye. In conclusion it must be the concern of scholar, dramatist and Taziye activist to find an effective way of teaching the method of acting, directing and other branches of Taziye performance to the younger generation to project the tradition into the future and to build a strong Iranian theatre.



Illustrations

Appendix One

Names associated with mourning for the Imam Hussein in different Shi'i communities¹

Country	Oration mourning Imam Husayn	Place where such orations held	Theatrical performances of the Karbal	Ceremonial Processions
Iran	Rawda	Husayniyya	Ta'ziya or Shabih	No particular name
Iraq	Qiraya	Husayniyya	Shabih	Ta'ziya, Mawkib
Bahrain	'Ashura	Ma'tam	Not performed	Ta'ziya
Lebanon	Ta'ziya or Dhikra	Held in private houses	Shabih or Tamthil al-Husayn	No particular name
India	Majlis	Imambara	Not often performed	Jalus

¹ Momen, Moojan op. cit., p.244.

Appendix Two

A Chodzko:

- 1- Le messager d'Allah, ou l'archange Gabriel annoncant au prophète Mohammed que ses deux fils doivent mourir en martyrs.
- 2- La mort due Prophète.
- 3- La jardin de Fathema, fille du Prophète
- 4- La Mort de Fathema.
- 5- Le Martyre de Aly.
- 6- Le Martyre de l'imam Hassan.
- 7- Même sujet.
- 8- Le Départ de Muslem, fils d'Aquil pour la ville de Koufa.
- 9- Le martyre des enfants de Muslem.
- 10- Le martyre des adolescents.
- 11- Le départ de l'imam Hussein de la Mecque.
- 12- Hour arrive sur le chemin de l'imam Hussein.
- 13- Même sujet.
- 14- L'Imam Hussein s'égare dans le desert.
- 15- Même sujet.
- 16- L'Imam Hussein implore la pitié des méchants.
- 17- Le Martyre d'Abbas.
- 18- Le Martyre d'Aly Ekber.
- 19- Le Martyre de Qassim.
- 20- Le Martyre des enfants de Zeineb.
- 21- Fathema Sogra envoie des fleurs de Médine à Kerbèla.
- 22- Fathema Sogra écrit une lettre à son frère.
- 23- Le Martyre d'Aly Esgar.
- 24- Le Martyre de l'imam Hussein.
- 25- Les Mânes des prophètes antérieurs viennent visiter le cadavre de l'imam Hussein.
- 26- Les Femmes de la tribu Bèni-Essed apportent de l'eau pour les gens du harem de l'imam Hussein.
- 27- Sèkina se rend au camp de Ben-sead et lui demande la permission d'enterrer les corps des martyres.
- 28- Les orphelins de l'imam Hussein sur son tombeau.
- 29- Kâtib et Vélid.
- 30- Un monastère de moines européens.
- 31- Les Arabes de la tribu Ibn-Essek inhument les martyrs.
- 32- Même sujet que celui du mystère XXX.
- 33- La Famille de l'imam Hussein envoie de ses nouvelles à Médine.

Appendix Three

Pelly:

- 1- Joseph and his Brethren.
- 2- Death of Ibráhim, the Son of Muhammad.
- 3- The disobedient son-
- 4- Magnanimous offer of ' Alí to sacrifice his Life for a Fellow-creature.
- 5- Death of the Prophet Muhammad.
- 6- The Seizure of the Khalífat by Abú Bakr.
- 7- Death of Fátimah the Daughter of the Prophet Muhammad.
- 8- The Martyrdom of Alí the Son of Abú Tálíb.
- 9- The Martyrdom of Hassan the Son of 'Alí.
- 10- The Martyrdom of Muslim the Envoy of Husain.
- 11- Murder of the Sons of Muslim.
- 12- The Departure of Husain from Madínah on his way to Kúfah.
- 13- Withdrawal of Husain from the road to Kúfah.
- 14- The Martyrdom of Húr.
- 15- The Martyrdom of ' Alís and Shauzab in defense of Husain.
- 16- A Night Assault on Husain's Camp.
- 17- Death of ' Alí Akbar.
- 18- Death of Kásim the Bridegroom.
- 19- Death of ' Abbás the Brother of Husain.
- 20- The Martyrdom of Háshim.
- 21- Rescue by Husain of Sultáan Ghiyás from the jaws of a Lion.
- 22- The Lamentations of Husain and his Family for the Lose of the Martyrdom in Karbalá.
- 23- Martyrdom of Husain.
- 24- The Camp at Karbalá after the Death of Husain.
- 25- The Field of Karbalá after the Death of Husain.
- 26- Flight of Shahrbánú from the Plain of Karbalá.
- 27- Husian's faithless Camel-driver.
- 28- Release of Fátimah, owing to the intervention.
- 29- Despatch of Husian's Family as Captives to Syria.
- 30- Arrival of Husain's Family at Damascus.
- 31- Conversion and Murder of the Ambassador from Europe.
- 32- Death of Rukayyah the Daughter of Husian.
- 33- Release of Husain's Family from Captivity.
- 34- Death of Zainab.
- 35- Conversion of Christian Lady to the Muhammadan Faith.
- 36- Conversion of King Caniah.
- 37- The Resurrection.

Appendix Four

Litten:

- 1- Ibrahim sacrificing Isma'il.
- 2- The Pigeon that brings the news of the Martyrdom of Hossein to Medina, and the recovery of the Jewish girl from her illness.
- 3- The Martyrdom of Hossein.
- 4- the Martyrdom of Abbas, son of Ali.
- 5- Khuli hides the head of the Imam in the oven.
- 6- The Martyrdom of Vahab and his farewell to Hossein's family.
- 7- A Christian lady visits the field of Kerbela and the miracles which happen.
- 8- Hossein asks for a respite from the enemy on the eve of Ashura.
- 9- The Wedding scene at Medina.
- 10- The disobedient son.
- 11- Suleiman A'mash makes a night assault on Ibn Ziad's camp.
- 12- Kania, the king of Europe.
- 13- Dorrat-al-Sadaf in Sha'ban (*eight month of the lunar year in the Arabic calendar*).
- 14- Imam Ja'far Sadeq (the sixth Imam of the Shi'ah).
- 15- Amir Teimour (Tamerlane).

The Litten's list has been taken from Forough's book (A comparative Study of Abraham's Sacrifice in Persian Passion Plays and Western Mystery Plays.)

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Handwritten text in Taziyeh script, arranged in multiple columns. The script is highly stylized and cursive, characteristic of the Taziyeh style. The text is written in black ink on a light background. The columns are separated by vertical lines, and the text flows from right to left within each column. The script is dense and fills most of the page.

A sample of script of Taziyeh